Time, Space and Multiplicity in China’s Harmonious World

A Thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
In the Faculty of Humanities

2012

Astrid H. M. Nordin

School of Social Sciences
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<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFA</td>
<td>Bo’ao Forum for Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASS</td>
<td>Chinese Academy of Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>Chinese Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNKI</td>
<td>China National Knowledge Infrastructure</td>
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<td>CPPCC</td>
<td>Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFW</td>
<td>Great Firewall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPC</td>
<td>National People’s Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLA</td>
<td>People’s Liberation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARA</td>
<td>State Administration of Religious Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCO</td>
<td>Shanghai Co-operation Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCM</td>
<td>Traditional Chinese Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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Abstract

Time, Space and Multiplicity in China’s Harmonious World

A Thesis Submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities, September 2012

Astrid H. M. Nordin, The University of Manchester

Multiplicity is a key challenge and opportunity of world politics, yet scholars continue to struggle to do it justice. One way of reducing the challenge multiple times and spaces present us with has been to organise them allochronically, to align spatial difference in temporal sequence. The effect is a story where others are not different, they are just behind. Scholars have criticised this thinking as it appears in “Western thought”. In recent years, suggestions have emerged that Chinese thought may offer an alternative that escapes allochronic thinking, most notably through the foreign policy-driven concept “harmonious world”. Scholars have studied this term with the aim of finding out its true meaning. This thesis asks instead what “harmony” – and more specifically “harmonious world” – does when it is deployed in contemporary China. It traces the concept across several contexts: the policy documents and speeches that launched it as an official term; the academic literatures that asked what a harmonious world might look like; the propaganda at Expo 2010 Shanghai China that aimed to illustrate it; and the online spoofing culture egao that was used to criticise, resist and avoid “harmonisation”.

The key claim of this thesis is that “harmonious world”, as articulated in the contexts examined here, has not taken place, is not taking place and will not take place. Ways of thinking about time, space and multiplicity in China’s relation to the world, and particularly “harmonious world”, repeat the allochronising logic recognisable from “Western” discourses, which disallows the openness of the future and reduces the possibilities of harmony and of the political. As an effect of its excessive proliferation harmony disappears as an imagined metaphysical possibility. The harmonious system is not based on co-operation or non co-operation, but works according to what this thesis calls an onco-operative logic: the quasi-suicidal logic of cancer and the (auto)immune. Ultimately, the aim and most important contribution of this thesis is to bring the onco-operative uncertainty of the political back into the harmonious world concept in order to elucidate the negotiation of danger and necessity of multiplicity.
Declaration

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Dedication

To Mabi Rosén, my grandmother, whose strength and courage are a constant inspiration.
Acknowledgements

A large debt of gratitude is owed to my supervisors, Maja Zehfuss and William A. Callahan. Their academic excellence remains an inspiration, as does their skill and patience in guiding an often messy PhD process (and the MA beforehand). I consider myself extremely fortunate to have worked with two such diligent and gifted scholars. Thank you for putting up with me.

I have many remarkable peers who have contributed to the thesis by way of long discussions, probing questions, feedback on drafts and moral support. Linsay Cunningham-Cross deserves special thanks for patient help with interviews and photographs during fieldwork in the blistering heat of the Shanghai Expo, and for feedback on work at various stages of the PhD process. Christopher Courtney, David Tobin, Małgorzata Jakimow, Elena Barabantseva, Shogo Suzuki and Kelvin Cheung have not only been good friends, but have also been indispensable in making me better understand different aspects of Chinese life and language (Chris also deserves a specific thanks for introducing me to the “walking interviews” research method and for reading the thesis in its entirety). Critical feedback and invaluable support was provided throughout by Jamie Johnson, Ronan O'Callaghan, Roisin Read and Julia Welland (Julia's own work on the doings and undoings of the political subject, as well as on successful failures, has been particularly influential). The enthusiasm and academic excellence of my colleagues from the British Inter-university China Centre helped spur me on, particularly that of Nicola Horsburgh, Holly Snape and Isabella Jackson. Part of the research was conducted at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, where Tom Lundborg, Linus Hagström, Johan Eriksson, Johan Lagerkvist, Michael Weissman, Björn Jerdén and Johan Englund made me feel welcome and helped me improve my work. Caroline Holmqvist and Dan Öberg also helped make my stay in Stockholm a productive and enjoyable one. Dan deserves special thanks for reading the entire thesis, for giving thorough and helpful feedback and for helping me understand Baudrillard to the extent that I do. I am also grateful for stimulating conversations and feedback on various parts of the thesis to Andrew Slack, Thomas Gregory, Tom Houseman, Kathryn Starnes, Oliver Turner, Chris Hughes, Emmanuel-Pierre Guittet and Kimberly Hutchings. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Ding Chih-Chi and Zhang Xiaoli for helping me properly decipher and translate philosophical texts in Chinese, with which I sometimes struggled. Miriam Nordfors and Marte Svare contributed by way of inspirational examples out in the real world.

Research groups that have helped develop my ideas by way of critical engagement include the Poststructuralist Politics Reading Group and the Poststructuralist and Critical Thought Research Cluster at the University of Manchester, the China Postgraduate Network, the Stockholm International Theory Group, the Research Seminar of the Stockholm University Department of Oriental Languages and the Joint Seminar of the Swedish Institute of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish Defence College and Stockholm University Department of Political Science. Members of these various groups helped improve my work significantly.
Research for this thesis was made possible by generous funding from the Economic and Social Research Council UK and the British Inter-university China Centre through a 1+3 studentship award and 9 months of Difficult Language Training funds. Additional funding from the Swedish CSN student aid, the Norman Chester research grant fund and the Erasmus Study and Work Placement Grant helped enhance the PhD experience. For the provision of employment I also thank the University of Manchester Politics and History departments, and the Södertörn University School of Social Studies.


Finally, to my family, Mabi Rosén, Bengt Nordin, Helena Nordin-Rudberg and Hedvig Nordin, for supporting a pursuit they sometimes doubted would end and often did not understand. Thank you.
Introduction: Multiplicity in a “harmonious world”

Multiplicity is a central aspect of modern life, of politics and of international relations. It is a key problem that we negotiate on a daily basis, and to which politics and international relations direct their attention. The existing multiplicity of worldviews, ideas and interests lies at the heart of the conflicts and discord to which politics and international relations traditionally respond. It underpins logics of identity and difference, inside and outside. Of course, we can identify multiplicity along many different lines of distinction: along ethnic, cultural or national lines, of geographical territories and states, of individuals and groups, of schools of thought or ideologies, and so on.

In all these forms of multitude a key aspect of the political has been thinking about how we can understand and respond to others in view of the distinctions we make. Relating to others who are not like us, perhaps with ideas, behaviours and worldviews that seem unfathomable or irreconcilable with our own, has remained a key political problem. Imagining others as different from ourselves has been a basis for violent containment and assimilation, as well as extermination, at various points in history (Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004).

At the same time, multiplicity is the very stuff that makes the idea of the political thinkable in the first place. Without multiplicity, all that is imaginable is one all-encompassing great unity: the Self, the One (Massey, 2005: 22-3). Without multiple viewpoints or positions, the making of choices that is politics becomes unimaginable – for how to choose, if there is nothing to choose between? And other things too seem impossible without multiplicity. Most importantly for the political, the idea of newness and a different future seems entirely dependent on multiplicity – for how could something different emerge from something that is all-encompassing and self-same?

This thesis focuses on negotiating these two aspects of multiplicity, its danger and its promise. I take seriously the need for thinking about the world in a way that allows for multiplicity: without it the possibility of the political and a different future seems to vanish, throwing us into an absolute homogeneity that is surely intolerable. At the
same time, however, imagining multiplicity and difference are also the conditions of possibility for exclusions and violences that are equally intolerable. Because of the contradictory imperatives of these two aspects of multiplicity, thinking about this problem remains a key question with which scholars, politicians, students and others need to grapple if they want to think about global politics and international relations. Because it concerns the very possibility of thinking the political and a different future, it continues to have significant political influence on relations around the globe. The way multiplicity is thought about necessarily has implications (whether recognised or not) for how we live with others in the world.

ALIGNING SPATIAL DIFFERENCE IN TEMPORAL SEQUENCE

In whatever sphere of life multiplicity is discussed, that multiplicity or difference is both spatial and temporal. Notions of time and space have an awkward position in the humanities and social sciences. These concepts lie at the heart of these disciplines and have produced a large body of scholarly literature. Yet they are often used, in academic as in popular discourse, without full consciousness of what is meant by them. Space and time can mean very different things and are often used with such inattention that their meanings – metaphorical, physical, theoretical, and so on – run into each other, and there is a slippage of meaning (Crang and Thrift, 2000a: 1). Many thinkers seem to have inherited an imagination so deeply ingrained that the concepts are used without being actively thought. Based on assumptions that are no longer recognised as such, it is an imagination with the ruthless force of the obvious (Massey, 2005: 17). Numerous influences come together to produce imaginings of time and space, which in turn come to restrict the possible imaginings of relations to others, of the future, and of the political. A key claim of this thesis is that these imaginings often carry with them unpromising assumptions, which deprive time and space of their most challenging characteristics.

This thesis is built on the idea that “the dichotomy between, and the ethical imperatives of self and other, is often interpreted through a language of spatial containers” (Crang and Thrift, 2000b: 7) and “between events at the same time or at
different times” (Hutchings, 2008: 6, emphasis in original). Such division has become recognised as a vehicle for identity formation through its associations, because it is used to categorise that which is the same time and space, homogeneity and self, against that which is an other time and space, alterity and difference (Fabian, 1983; Ashley, 1987; 1988; Campbell, 1998). In becoming imbued in this chain of meanings – as that which divides or unites, makes same or makes other – the way time and space are thought becomes fundamental to the way it is possible to think what the relation between different selves and others is, was and will be.

To put it differently, this makes time and space central to thinking the political. In making this claim, I draw on a differentiation made elsewhere between politics in the narrow sense, or politics, and politics in the wider sense, or the political.¹ The former is used to describe the areas of life that we commonly call politics (like policy making and other government business). The latter concerns instead what gets to count as politics in the first place, or in the words of Jenny Edkins “the establishment of that very social order which sets out a particular, historically specific account of what counts as politics and defines other areas of social life as not politics” (1999: 2). In this way, Edkins equates “depoliticization” with “technologization”, or “a reduction to calculability” (1999: 1). What shifts the political into politics, or depoliticizes, then, is reducing something to a question of applying rules (Edkins, 1999: 11). To repoliticize, following Foucault, is instead “to interrupt discourse, to challenge what have, through discursive practices, been constituted as normal, natural, and accepted ways of carrying on” (Edkins, 1999: 12). If the political is concerned with such a delineation of “politics” and “not politics”, or between self and other and with how to relate to others, then time and space become a central concern not only to the field of international relations (IR), but to the very idea of the political itself.

The imagination of multiplicity, and the distinction between same and other that it requires, is then a necessity for the political. Yet, because it is also threatening in many ways, thinking about multiplicity has often involved moves that decrease its actuality.

¹ The distinction has been discussed by a number of writers, including Ernesto Laclau (Laclau and Zac, 1994), Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe (1990), Claude Lefort (1988) and Fred Dallmayr (1993), to name but a few.
One way of diminishing the threat (and opportunity) of difference has been to order it in temporal sequence. This way of thinking imagines different countries, peoples, groups, individuals or ways of life as journeying on one developmental path – it is just that some people have fallen behind while others are ahead. This way of thinking has long been with us across various strands of humanities and social sciences.  

Today, what used to be called “savage” or “uncivilised” is referred to as “developing”, “modernising” or as “being socialised”. This shift in language, however, has done little to change the fundamental manoeuvre of convening spatial difference in a temporal line. Who or what is at what precise position in the developmental queue varies, of course, from one account to the other. Most often, however, it is the self (whatever that is imagined to be in a given story) that is positioned ahead and others are imagined as catching-up.

**ALLOCHRONY, COEVAL MULTIPLICITIES, POLITICS AND FUTURES**

This organisation of difference in temporal sequence has been referred to as “allochrony” in previous literatures, at least since Johannes Fabian’s *Time and the Other* (1983: 32). In this work, “allochrony” marks the removal or denial of what Fabian terms “coevalness” or “coeval multiplicities” (1983: 31, 34), by which he means “a common, active ‘occupation,’ or sharing of time”, seeking “ways to meet the Other on the same ground, in the same Time” (1983: 31, 165). Whilst Fabian understood coevalness as a dialectical concept of time (1983: 182), others have since developed the notion in a way that does not imply coeval multiplicities as the synthesis or teleological endpoint of such a dialectical process. Most notably, Doreen Massey has in her impassioned manifesto *For Space* (2005) discussed the continuing resort to allochronic thinking and the difficulty of imagining coeval multiplicities, trying to retain Fabian’s connotation with dialogue and encounter, but without teleological implications. She argues that organising time and space in an allochronic manner robs

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2 A number of critiques of this manner of thinking have been put forward. In this thesis I trace the problematique as it has been explored particularly by Johannes Fabian (1983), Kimberley Hutchings (2008), Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney (2004; 2010), and Doreen Massey (2005). Such work is discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis.
both of their most challenging (and promising) characteristics, their heterogeneity and openness (2005: 9-12).

Throughout this thesis I explore how assumptions about time and space make us fall back into allochronic ways of thinking. I search for ways of thinking coeval multiplicities, and for an understanding of why it seems so difficult for us to write in a way that allows for it.\(^3\) Importantly, I am concerned with the effects of failing to step up to the challenge that time and space could, and should, present us with: coeval multiplicities.

The allochronic mode of thinking, and our corresponding difficulties in thinking coeval multiplicities, is problematic for several reasons. Most immediately, its timeline is often imagined to imply a moral yardstick, where imagining others as behind comes to connote their lack in value and morals. Moreover, it often implies childlike qualities, which in turn means that “they” need to be guided, educated and socialised by “us”. “They” cannot quite be trusted to make responsible and mature decisions, and so the leadership or “being ahead” that is stipulated acquires a moral dimension where “we” ought to lead “them”. In this way, allochronic thinking has been complicit with colonial and neo-colonial global relations (Stocking, 1987: 237).

Even more problematic, perhaps, is the effect this move has on difference, when difference in space becomes difference in time. In this move, the otherness of others – that is their singularity or alterity, that which makes them unique and ungraspable to my language and imagination – is reduced to graspable difference, to variations on a theme. This way of imagining difference has serious consequences for our ability to imagine a different open future – and this in turn has debilitating consequences for our ability to imagine the political. The imagining of one single developmental path, where others will eventually become like us, robs others of their own future. It turns difference into sameness, other into self. “Their” future is no longer open to choices.

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\(^3\) This difficulty is underlined by the fact that a number of the thinkers who I follow here in critiquing the tendency to think allochronically have in turn been accused of reproducing such thinking. For example, Kathleen Davis has criticised Fabian for repeating it through periodizing the medieval and the modern (Davis, 2008: 2-3). In chapter 2 I moreover show how Massey reproduces it through the emphasis in her reading of Derrida’s work.
and to the political, it is already inscribed in the story. Their future is our past. Their future is already decided for them. And this of course robs “us” of a different future too. Because, again, newness must be impossible without otherness: how could something different emerge from something that is all-encompassing and self-same?

**CHINA – THE “OTHER COUNTRY”**

From the above it should be clear that I am not the first to think about the allochrony problematique or the possibility of thinking coeval multiplicities. Yet the allochronic way of thinking remains prevalent in politics and IR and there is a need to further explore the details of how this logic operates in different contexts.

Significantly, the academic literatures that have discussed this problematique have been heavily focused on the way it appears in theorisations or imaginations of the world that are typically understood as Western, in European languages. Empirical investigations drawn upon for explicit engagements with these theoretical literatures have tended to focus on the way a Western colonial self constructed or managed others through allochronic distancing (for example Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004). There has of course been good reason to focus on these cases, given the prevalence of such theories in the academic disciplines of politics and IR, and the pervasiveness of European and American colonial and neo-colonial practices over the last few centuries. Having said this, some of these literatures suggest that we may find alternatives to allochronic thinking “beyond the European imperium” (Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004: ix). We have now arrived, therefore, at a point where there is also good reason to further investigate the allochrony problematique in other places and languages. Are there other traditions and languages elsewhere that are better equipped to think coeval multiplicities?

This thesis contributes to the task of answering this question, through tracing the allochrony problematique in contemporary China. There are several reasons why China is a good case for embarking on such an endeavour. First of all, as Rey Chow has

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4 This is true for the key works in which I trace the problematique in this thesis (Fabian, 1983; Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004; Massey, 2005; Hutchings, 2008; Blaney and Inayatullah, 2010).
argued, China has come to have a distinct relation to “the West” as the “other country” of the latter (Chow, 1991: 81). One way in which China has been marked as “other” to “the West” has been through the imagination of China as “behind” in the way outlined above. Since the 1990s, one common way of imagining China’s relation to the world has adapted the vocabulary of “integration”, “engagement” and “socialisation” (see for example Shinn, 1996; Johnston and Ross, 1999; Johnston, 2008). In these stories, China is a follower, or in Alistair Iain Johnston’s words a “novice” (Johnston, 2008: 32-33), that has only recently “joined the world” (Oksenberg and Economy, 1999), and needs to and/or will learn to be more like “us”. Johnston’s own work draws on child socialisation (Johnston, 2008: 5), and is but one example of an awkward acceptance in the wider IR literatures of imagining China as a child or teenager. In this imaginary, China is conceived as a prior version of our mature selves to which we relate in terms of a “huge educational effort” (Oksenberg and Economy, 1999: 28). On this logic, China’s “joining the world” and “engagement with world affairs” from the late 1980s onwards (Economy, 1999) is unsurprising, an inevitable evolutionary step.\(^5\)

Another way in which China has been rendered as the “other country” has been the insistence on Chinese exceptionalism, an attitude that has risen in recent years and to a significant extent begun to displace the prior focus on integration (Callahan, 2012: 33). In this story, China offers an alternative to the failures of “the West”. This position forms the basis for some of the discussion over the last decade of the possibility of a “Chinese school” of IR (Yu Zhengliang, 2005; Qin Yaqing, 2011). The building of this particular school rests on the idea that China is radically different from other countries and therefore can only be properly understood through the lens of “Chinese culture”. Thinkers that are (sometimes perhaps reluctantly) drawn upon as part of this emerging school look to a select mix of concepts and thinkers from China’s past as a source of inspiration for developing theories that can better explain China’s rise in a globalising world (see for example Qin Yaqing, 2007; Yan Xuetong, 2011).

\(^5\) Thanks to Nicola Horsburgh for alerting me to Economy’s reading here.
In this line of thinking there are also ideas about a “China model” for development unique to China, as well as discussion of a “Beijing consensus” as opposed to the Washington consensus. With regards to these debates, Shaun Breslin argues:

[t]his idea of China’s difference is part of a feedback loop that has seen the idea of the Chinese model both result from, and then reinforce, conceptions of Chinese difference and exceptionalism: the model is both a result of China’s unique history and at the same time a manifestation of China’s uniqueness and ‘difference’ (Breslin, 2011: 1343).

Those who deploy such a Chinese exceptionalist imaginary may conceive of China as a threat or as an opportunity, but insist on China as a unique case.

Most interesting for our enquiry here are claims made in recent years that Chinese thought can offer better ways of thinking about world order, that can help us do away with some of the problems associated with the European traditions that have been criticised for thinking allochronically. Shih Chih-yu (2010), for example, has argued that Eastern thought does not operate on the binary self-other distinctions of Western thought since the European Enlightenment. Zhao Tingyang has similarly argued that the Tianxia system that was China’s central world-view prior to being a modern state was a world “with no outside”, no binary “other” (2006b; 2005). Therefore, China’s harmonious thought can allegedly overcome the problems of a “Western” state system that has dealt with difference by way of containment, assimilation or extermination (cf. Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004).

There are good reasons, then, to begin an excavation of coeval multiplicities “beyond the European imperium” by discussing the Chinese case. My point is not to attack particular individuals or schools of thought for falling back on an allochronic imaginary. Rather, I want to show how it is a trope that is pervasive throughout our thinking about China’s foreign relations, irrespective of theoretical approach, geographical location, or normative predilection. Simply put, it is a deeply ingrained pattern of thought that is difficult to escape, even with our best efforts. Although there have of course been other others too, China has been imagined as an “other country” for a considerable time, through precisely the allochronising language that I have
described above. At the same time, there are claims that a Chinese tradition of thinking imagines self and other in a way that is radically different to the problematic imaginations in a Western tradition. This line of argument suggests that Chinese thought is indeed able to offer the input from beyond the European imperium that we need to imagine different futures, and possibly coeval multiplicities. Such claims deserve to be taken seriously. What is more, China’s projected rise to superpower status is commonly considered one of the biggest future challenges to world order, and scholars and pundits alike have begun to ask how a rising China may change the way we think about the world and global politics. This expectation of China’s ability to shape the future supports the choice of China as an important case for studying the allochrony problematique beyond what is traditionally thought of as “Western tradition”.

HARMONIOUS WORLD

In conjunction with China’s rise, and the narratives of engagement and exceptionalism that I have described, scholars and policy makers have thus begun to ask how a rising China will reshape international norms. What would a world under Chinese leadership look like? What norms does China want to promote, if or when it has the power to do so? The answer Beijing has given to these questions can be summarised in one word: harmony.

Every generation of leadership of the People’s Republic has used set phrases, or *tifa* (提法), to stamp their mark on Chinese politics. The rise of “harmony” on the Chinese IR research agenda has been rapid and forceful since Chinese president Hu Jintao launched it as an official policy concept around 2004-2005 (Hu Jintao, 2005b; 2005c; CCP Central Committee, 2004).6 Two key policies under Hu have been “harmonious society” (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会) and “harmonious world” (*hexie shijie* 和谐世界). At the time when Hu’s harmonious policies were launched, Deng Xiaoping’s “reform and opening up” had been praised for bringing about the impressive growth of the Chinese economy and for pulling a remarkable number of people out of poverty. With it,

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6 For a discussion of the 2004 document on harmonious society, see Miller (2007).
however, came growing inequality both within and between provinces as well as continued environmental degradation and social unrest due to discontent with these effects. Hu’s rhetorical focus on harmony emerged in the wake of this growing inequality and sought to calm the opposition and unrest which risked growing to a point of dangerously challenging party rule (Boutonnet, 2009; Xinhua, 2007b).

The term also had its precedents in foreign policy discourse. As pointed out by William A. Callahan (2011: 257), harmony was related to policy prior to Hu’s major reuse of the term, both in academic debates on IR and wider social sciences (for example Liu Zhiguang, 1992) and in Jiang Zemin’s speeches (for example Jiang Zemin, 1997). “Harmonious world” saw its definite launch to an international audience as a new Chinese foreign policy concept in a speech made by Hu Jintao to the United Nations (UN) at its 60th anniversary summit in September 2005 (Hu Jintao, 2005a; Xinhua, 2005). The term had been tested in April 2005 in an address to the Asian-African Summit in Jakarta and in July in a joint statement by China and Russia during Hu’s visit to Moscow (Yee, 2008). It has since Hu’s speech to the UN become frequently used in both policy documents and the academic texts that study them. “Harmonious world” generally built on the reform and opening up, references to soft power, an increasing Chinese assertiveness to go beyond being a “status quo” power and a renewed focus on “Chineseness”. Specifically, harmonious world has been understood as “a development and alternative expression of ‘peaceful rising’”, the previous set phrase that had a short period of popularity in the earlier days of Hu’s presidency (Di Dongsheng, 2007).

The operative term for “harmony” in this slogan is he (和), which was recently selected the Chinese character that “carries the most meaning for Chinese culture” by a popular Chinese magazine (Chin, 2010). The concept featured heavily in the recent line of propagandistic mega-events that included the 2008 Beijing Olympics (Callahan, 2010: 3-4) and the 2010 Shanghai Expo (Nordin, 2012b). In academia, it is often referred to as “foundational” or a “key concept” in Chinese thought (Ba Xiang, 2010: 3). Overall, it is argued that the new policy concept “harmonious world” is favourably seen in Chinese academic circles because it shows a “long overdue attempt by China to
exercise normative power in international relations” (Guo Sujian and Blanchard, 2008b: 9, see also Jian Zhang, 2007).

“Harmonious world”, then, may be understood as an example of the type of alternative worldview that has emerged from beyond the European imperium. The purpose of this thesis is to critically investigate this important and under-researched concept, with special attention to the allochrony problematique. A central tenet of this thesis is that “harmony”, like any other term, can mean different things in different contexts. This shifts the investigation from prior scholarly focus on finding the “true meaning” of the concept, to its function and structuring consequences: from what it means to what it does. The key question of this thesis therefore asks: what does “harmony” – and more specifically “harmonious world” – do when it is deployed in contemporary China?

DOING AND UNDOING THINGS WITH “HARMONIOUS WORLD” IN CHINESE POLITICS

Despite the heavy focus on harmony within China, scholars outside of China have paid sparse attention to the harmony concept during Hu's presidency. This thesis aims to address this lack of critical attention to the important harmony concept. The institutional backing behind “harmonious world” makes it more than just another piece of propaganda. It is key to justifying contemporary policy practice and academic propositions in China, and has made its way into international political fora and academic debates. In this sense, we need to talk about it because so many people are talking about it.

It is common for Chinese policy makers and scholars to state that when China’s ideas of a harmonious world are properly understood, belief in the China threat will wane.7 A significant proportion of academic commentary on “harmony” similarly stresses the absence of proper understanding and a “specific meaning” of the term as a lack to be filled (Guo Sujian and Blanchard, 2008a: 2). However, unlike most analyses of Chinese foreign policy, this thesis does not try to find out what “harmony” really means – in

7 See for example comments in People's Daily (2006).
fact I claim that it does not have one single specific meaning that can be discovered. Rather, I investigate what harmony *does*, meaning how it functions in particular texts or contexts, and structures them in specific ways and with political consequences. I want to know how this official language gears us towards imagining the world and China’s place and time in that world in particular ways. I am particularly interested here in how difference in time and space is ordered in the notion of a harmonious world. I want to know if this “foundational concept” of Chinese thought offers a worldview that repeats the problem of allochronic thinking, if it offers an alternative way of thinking coeval multiplicities, or if it orders time and space in some entirely different way. But I am also interested in how this official language migrates and morphs in other contexts outside policy documents and in wider Chinese society. I therefore investigate not only how things are done with official words in Chinese politics, but also how they are undone – resisted, deconstructed and changed – most often by their very own logic.

This thesis then goes towards answering my key question by way of three sub-questions:

1) What are the assumptions behind and political consequences of different ways of articulating “harmonious world”, particularly in terms of ordering time and space?

2) What is the overall effect of the proliferation of “harmony” in contemporary Chinese society?

3) Are there contradictions in or between different articulations of “harmonious world”? How are these made visible?

In order to answer these questions I trace the concept “harmonious world” across several contexts. First, in the policy documents and speeches that established it as a set phrase. Second, in the academic literatures that took it on and asked what a harmonious world might look like. Third, in the propaganda at the world fair in Shanghai in 2010 that tried to illustrate and popularise it. Fourth, in a particular form of online expression called *egao* (恶搞), which operates through spoofs, puns and wordplay to unsettle official language, including “harmonious world”.
Before I embark on this enquiry, a caveat is necessary. My thesis is concerned with two contradictory imperatives, the urge to acknowledge the promises of multiplicity, and the drive to suppress its dangers. The notion of coeval multiplicities presents itself here as the solution or opposite of the allochrony problematique that I have outlined. However, the contradiction of equally strong imperatives for how to deal with multiplicity form what Jacques Derrida has called an *aporia*, which will not let itself be resolved or neutralised. Maria Stern and Marysia Zalewski have discussed this conundrum through drawing on Anthony Burke, to whom “an aporia is not a contradiction which can be brought into the dialectic, smoothed over and resolved into the unity of the concept, but an untotalisable problem at the heart of the concept, disrupting its trajectory, emptying out its fullness, opening out its closure” (Burke, 2007: 30–1, cited in Stern and Zalewski, 2009: 620). Because the imposition of allochronic thinking seems built into our language for writing world politics, I am inevitably setting myself up to fail. I will no doubt fail to resolve my dilemma, or to find a satisfactory “greener grass” to offer up to the reader. Ultimately, however, it is precisely in this failure to escape the performative re-enactment of the problematique that I criticise that I want to claim some form of success. I fail to surpass the aporia with which I grapple – I attempt to read how “harmonious world” deconstructs, to counter discourses that treat it as though it had only one true meaning, but in doing so I inevitably reinforce certain understandings of the concept, whilst marginalising others. I cannot possibly do justice to the multiplicities of what harmonious world can mean and do, and therefore fail to live up to the very parameters I myself have set. In this sense, I as a writer am implicated in that which I oppose.

In this failing, however, I hope to “further disclose the frantic and violent composition of disciplinary demands to produce the impossible: usable sure knowledge” (Stern and Zalewski, 2009: 629). We cannot “know” what harmonious world is, means or does in any complete manner – and writing about it will invariably fail to do justice to the things the term could possibly do. However, through the excessive or subversive repetition that I undertake in this thesis, this instability and impossibility of fullness is made visible. Moreover, following Stern and Zalewski, the aporetic nature of the
issues under study here can reveal “snags, tears, and portals, inviting alternative paths” (2009: 629), offering room for “thinking otherwise” (Stern and Zalewski, 2009: 629; Derrida, 1982; 1993; Burke, 2007: 30-31). In other words, there is always the possibility of another doing and undoing. On this understanding, we can achieve a “successful-failure” of sorts, which fails to offer the “comforting reassurances” of totalising discourse, but may succeed in suggesting “open-ended conclusions and future[s]” (Stern and Zalewski, 2009: 629). Such a “successful-failure” in understanding both harmonious world and the possibility of coeval multiplicities is the goal of this thesis.

“HARMONIOUS WORLD” IN HU’S POLICY DISCOURSE

Before moving on to the examination of “harmonious world” in the different non-governmental contexts, we need to outline in some detail the way the concept has been deployed in the party-state speeches and policy documents that launched it as an official policy term since 2005. In the following section, I therefore examine what the deployment of “harmonious world” in official party-state speeches and policy documents has done. In what terms is “harmonious world” described? With what other concepts is it aligned? Can we already in these texts identify any assumptions behind or political consequences of this articulation of “harmonious world”, particularly in terms of time, space and multiplicity?

Where the prior formulation “peaceful rise” has been understood as an early and somewhat fumbling attempt by Hu to make a permanent mark on Chinese policy through his own formulation, it is said that “[t]he policy discourse ‘harmonious society’ and its foreign policy alter ego ‘harmonious world’ has become the defining discourse of the Chinese Communist Party under Hu Jintao” (Sow Keat Tok and Zheng Yongnian, 2007: summary). It was after the decline of the “peaceful rise” formulation that Hu made his definite launch of harmonious world to the UN at its 60th anniversary summit:

[w]e should do away with misgivings and estrangement existing between civilizations and make humanity more harmonious and our world more colorful. We should endeavor to preserve the diversity of civilizations in the
spirit of equality and openness, make international relations more democratic and jointly build towards a harmonious world where all civilizations coexist and accommodate each other (Hu Jintao, 2005a).

In December the same year a white paper titled *China’s Peaceful Development Road* was published, expanding in somewhat more detail what these points meant. Notably absent from the paper was the term “rise”, referring instead to “peaceful development”, and a section at its end explained the goal of “building a harmonious world” (State Council of the PRC, 2005b). In October 2007 the 17th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) wrote the concept into its constitution, calling for the building of “a harmonious world characterized by sustained peace and common prosperity” (Xinhua, 2007a; 2007b).8

Clearly, Hu’s summary in his 2005 speech to the UN seems to share my concern with acknowledging diversity and multiplicity in an equal manner. It pointed out four key aspects of harmonious world: “[f]irst, uphold multilateralism to realize common security … [s]econd, uphold mutually beneficial cooperation to achieve common prosperity … [t]hird, uphold the spirit of inclusiveness to build a harmonious world together” and “[f]ourth, promote UN reform actively and prudently” (Hu Jintao, 2005a, see also Guo Sujian and Blanchard, 2008b: 6). Hu implied that “Harmonious world” continues themes from the “five principles of peaceful coexistence” advocated by Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, including mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence (Hu Jintao, 2005a).

*China’s Peaceful Development Road* elaborated to some extent what these points meant, declaring in its first section:

> [p]eace, opening-up, cooperation, harmony and win-win are our policy, our idea, our principle and our pursuit … China’s road of peaceful development is a brand-new one for mankind in pursuit of civilization and progress, the inevitable way for China to achieve modernization, and a serious choice and

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8 Note that this refers to the constitution of the CCP (Communist Party of China, 2007: General Program), not that of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) (National People’s Congress of the PRC, 2004). The latter contains no reference to harmony.
solemn promise made by the Chinese government and the Chinese people (State Council of the PRC, 2005b).

Harmony is here aligned with spatial “opening-up” as well as temporal “progress” and “modernisation”. It is associated with “civilisation”, “co-operation” and “win-win”, “with all as winners” (State Council of the PRC, 2005b). It is a “choice” and “promise”, where China “endeavors to play a constructive and locomotive role” and “strive constantly to ... promote human civilization and progress” (State Council of the PRC, 2005b). China’s future is thus an active programme, but importantly this choice is described as “inevitable”.

The imagination of the future in terms of inevitable choice runs throughout the White Paper, and this inevitability is grounded in the particularism of Chinese history and culture in a way that we recognise from the exceptionalist academic literatures that were outlined above:

[i]t is an inevitable choice based on China’s historical and cultural tradition that China persists unwervingly in taking the road of peaceful development. The Chinese nation has always been a peace-loving one. Chinese culture is a pacific culture. The spirit of the Chinese people has always featured their longing for peace and pursuit of harmony (State Council of the PRC, 2005b).

Thus, in the White Paper, an essentialised Chinese culture and spirit become foundational as prior to any Chinese relations with the world, exemplified by Ming dynasty navigator Zheng He (1371-1435): “[w]hat he brought to the outside world was peace and civilization” (State Council of the PRC, 2005b). Following the example of Zheng He we are told that although an explicit aim is to “make the country powerful”, “China did not seek hegemony in the past, nor does it now, and will not do so in the future when it gets stronger. China’s development will never pose a threat to anyone” (State Council of the PRC, 2005b). However, as we will see in subsequent chapters, academic debates show that this statement may be understood in China in ways that make “non-hegemony” look quite similar to what we commonly think of as hegemony (see also Cunningham-Cross and Callahan, 2011: 367).

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9 For a refutation of the claims to China’s peaceful history that discusses such claims about Zheng He specifically, see Wang Yuan-Kang (2011: 157-66).
The White Paper’s final section is titled “Building a Harmonious World of Sustained Peace and Common Prosperity”, where the “harmonious world” concept is expanded upon:

[m]ankind has only one home – the Earth. Building a harmonious world of sustained peace and common prosperity is a common wish of the people throughout the world as well as the lofty goal of China in taking the road of peaceful development (State Council of the PRC, 2005b).

Here, the trait described above as particular to the “Chinese people”, “Chinese nation” and “Chinese culture”, based on history and essential spirit, is broadened to make harmonious world the wish of people throughout the world, but the goal of China. Again:

[w]hen dealing with international relations, it is necessary to persist in proceeding from the common interests of all the people throughout the world, make efforts to expand common interests, enhance understanding through communication, strengthen cooperation through understanding and create a win-win situation through cooperation (State Council of the PRC, 2005b).

Significantly, humankind has “only one home” where this common wish and interest is located. Common interest is imagined as pre-constituted, yet needs to be expanded.

This holistic idea of the Earth and humankind’s wishes sits to an extent in tension with the stress on state relations that the government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) claims should be based on non-intervention, multilateralism and equality between states. Crucially, it is emphasised that any potential international disputes and conflicts should be settled “peacefully through consultations and negotiations on the basis of equality” (State Council of the PRC, 2005b).

Moreover, not only are states imagined as basic units, but so too are civilisations, with the goal of “upholding tolerance and opening to achieve dialogue among civilizations. Diversity of civilizations is a basic feature of human society, and an important driving force for the progress of mankind” (State Council of the PRC, 2005b). Furthermore, echoing Hu’s speech to the UN:

[d]ialogues and exchanges among civilizations should be encouraged with the aim of doing away with misgivings and estrangement existing between
civilizations, and develop together by seeking common ground while putting aside differences, so as to make mankind more harmonious and the world more colorful. We should endeavor to preserve the diversity of civilizations and development patterns, and jointly build a harmonious world where all civilizations coexist and accommodate one another (State Council of the PRC, 2005b).

China is again seen as a leader of this process: “China is working hard to bring about a just and rational new international political and economic order” and is “working harder to get the rest of the world to understand China” (State Council of the PRC, 2005b, my emphasis).

With Hu’s speech to the UN and the subsequent white paper, the foundations were laid for the vast proliferation of “harmonious world” that has since been sustained, precisely in order to “get the rest of the world to understand China”. Since 2005, the term has become a staple in the PRC government’s work reports, in white papers on its relations with the world, and in speeches by government officials including

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10 Since 2000, the only mention of harmony in a government work report prior to Hu’s 2005 speech to the UN was by then Premier Zhu Rongji in 2003, where it was briefly mentioned with reference to creating a standardized administrative system and to justify the postponement of raising government salaries and pensions, pending the need to “harmonize relationships among the interests of all quarters” (Zhu Rongji, 2003). Harmony gained significantly more prominence in Wen Jiabao’s 2005 work report, where one of the “basic ideas” for the work of government in that year was to “build a harmonious socialist society” (Wen Jiabao, 2005). The work report in the subsequent year, the first one after Hu’s speech to the UN, mentioned “harmonious world” for the first time: “The Chinese government and people will work tirelessly with the people of all other nations for a peaceful, just and harmonious new world” (Wen Jiabao, 2006). Work reports in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 continued to use “harmonious world” as a marker and descriptor if the government’s foreign policy ambitions (Wen Jiabao, 2007; 2008; 2009; 2010b; 2011; 2012).

11 The term “harmonious world” has been key to two particular white papers: China’s Peaceful Development Road, discussed above (State Council of the PRC, 2005b), and China’s Peaceful Development, which followed 6 years later (State Council of the PRC, 2011c). Harmonious world is given a foundational position at the outset of other white papers, such as China’s first foreign policy white paper on Latin America and the Caribbean Region in 2008 (Central People’s Government of the PRC, 2008), and a white paper elaborating on the Chinese government’s policies and positions on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation (State Council of the PRC, 2005a). In general terms, “harmony” has featured in white papers at least since the early 1990s, but saw a sharp rise in popularity after 2005. In the 14 years before 2005, 22 white papers used the term “harmony” (hexie 和谐, or in English some other grammatical permutation of the word), and 19 did not, as follows: 1991 1 of 1 paper used the term in 1992 1 of 2; 1993 0 of 1; 1994 1 of 2; 1995 2 of 3; 1996 1 of 3; 1997 2 of 3; 1998 1 of 3; 1999 1 of 1; 2000 4 of 7; 2001, 1 of 3; 2002, 2 of 2; 2003, 2 of 4; and in 2004, 3 of 5. In the 7 years after 2005, 30 white papers used the term, only 7 did not, as follows: 2005 7 of 7; 2006 3 of 4; 2007 1 of 2; 2008 2 of 4; 2009 5 of 6; 2010 5 of 5; 2011 7 of 9.
President Hu Jintao,12 Premier Wen Jiabao,13 Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi,14 as well as lower ranking officials15 and ambassadors,16 Vice-President Xi Jinping also deployed the concept in his period of grooming for take-over after Hu's expected retirement in 2012.17

“Harmonious world” has been used to motivate and promote a plethora of things and positions, from the party-state’s particular stance on border politics (State Council of the PRC, 2009b: VIII), the Nanjing massacre (Embassy of the PRC in the UK, 2011a) and cyber-control (Liu Xiaoming, 2011b), to Chinese language and Confucius Institutes (Embassy of the PRC in Chile, 2011), the 12th five-year plan (Liu Xiaoming, 2011a) and fashion (Embassy of the PRC in the UK, 2011b). It has been deployed for similar purposes and retaining the same formulations in numerous languages.18

Many of these documents redeploy precise phrases from Hu’s speech and from the white paper on China’s Peaceful Development Road, sometimes referring back to these explicitly.19 In terms of conceptualisation, these documents display significant continuity with regards to key themes that have reappeared since the 2005 White Paper. It is claimed that building harmony is a “guarantee” for social and economic

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13 Wen Jiabao (2010a). See also Xinhua (2010f).
15 Some examples include Wu Bangguo, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (2010), State Councilor Dai Bingguo, (2011; 2012), and Ye Xiaowen, head of the State Administration for Religious Affairs of China (SARA) (Xinhua, 2008).
16 For a small selection, see examples from Antigua and Barbuda (Liu Hanming, 2011), Bahamas (Hu Dingxian, 2010; Hu Shan, 2011), Bangladesh (Embassy of the PRC in PR Bangladesh, 2011), Barbados (Embassy of the PRC in Barbados, 2010; Wei Qiang, 2012), Botswana (Liu Huanxing, 2011), Brazil (Chen Duqing, 2007; Qiu Xiaoqi, 2011a; 2011b), Chile (Embassy of the PRC in Chile, 2011), Commonwealth of Dominica (Embassy of the PRC in Commonwealth of Dominica, 2011; Wang Zonglai, 2011), Democratic Republic of Congo (Wang Yingwu, 2011), Djibouti (Zhang Guoqing and Kadjieh, 2010), Ethiopia (Liu Guijin, 2010), Germany (Embassy of the PRC in Germany, 2010), Italy (Ding Wei and Cubeddu, 2010), Lesotho (Hu Dingxian, 2012), Liberia (Zhou Yuxiao, 2011), Mexico (Yin Hengmin, 2007; Embassy of the PRC in Mexico, 2011), Micronesia (Zhang Weidong, 2010; 2011), Nepal (Yang Houlan, 2012), and Tanzania (Liu Xinheng, 2010).
17 See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC (2011b).
18 A number of PRC embassies make such examples available, for example in French (Zhang Guoqing and Kadjieh, 2010; Wang Yingwu, 2011), Italian (Ding Wei and Cubeddu, 2010), German (Embassy of the PRC in Germany, 2010), Spanish (Yin Hengmin, 2007) and Portuguese (Chen Duqing, 2007; Qiu Xiaoqi, 2011a; 2011b).
19 An example of such explicit reference to China’s Peaceful Development Road can be found in a white paper on defence the next year (State Council of the PRC, 2006).
development (Wen Jiabao, 2006). It is “in line with the trend of the times in the world”²⁰ and it “reflects the common interests and aspirations of people across the globe”.²¹ Yet, it is a value specific to the Chinese people, state and civilisation, because of history.²² It is said that in order to build a harmonious world, there must be: political equality and democracy,²³ “win-win” development and mutually beneficial economic cooperation,²⁴ cultural exchanges that promote common progress,²⁵ and countries of the world must work together in friendly cooperation to address traditional and non-traditional global security threats²⁶ and bring about “lasting peace and common prosperity”²⁷ for the whole world. A stated commitment to multilateral diplomacy,²⁸ the UN and its millennium development goals,²⁹ and the stress on “safeguarding China’s sovereignty”³⁰ are constant. It is again stressed that China “will never seek hegemony”.³¹ A key to this development is to “increase understanding” and “develop the image of China as a peaceful, democratic, culturally advanced and

³⁰ Wen Jiabao (2007; 2008; 2009), State Council of the PRC (2011c). “Safeguarding China’s sovereignty” in a harmonious world typically implies recognition of the “one China” principle, according to which there is only one China and Taiwan is part of China (Central People’s Government of the PRC, 2008).
³¹ State Council of the PRC (2005a; 2009b).
progressive country”, where having a shared language is often understood as a prerequisite for harmony and understanding.

There has also been some further clarification and re-emphasis by supplementing the articulation of harmonious world with concepts that can be read as always implicitly aligned with it, or not. In Hu’s 2007 report at the 17th Party Congress, the themes of win-win, non-hegemonism, peaceful cooperation and equality were reiterated, with further stress on a future world order where China will always stand for “fairness and justice”, an order which is also rational due to the application of China’s “scientific outlook on development” (Hu Jintao, 2007). Another development has been the more explicit implication of a civilising mission of sorts, because in order to build harmony there is a need to “develop a culture of harmony, carry out the program for improving civic morality and foster civilized social conduct” (Wen Jiabao, 2008).

Moreover, the nature of Chinese people and culture is not the only reason why China wants to build a harmonious world, it is also said that being locked in an integrated holistic system requires a harmonious world to be built (State Council of the PRC, 2009e: III) – a reformulation, perhaps, of the earlier statement that mankind has “only one home”. In conjunction with this one-worldism, environmental protection appears as a new goal, with regards to which countries should “follow the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities” (State Council of the PRC, 2011c). The motivation is again said to be the holistic nature of the world: “all countries should help each

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33 State Council of the PRC (2009a: VI).
34 The “scientific outlook on development” (科学发展观) is one of the guiding principles of the CCP incorporating sustainable development, social welfare, a humanistic society, increased democracy and, ultimately, the creation of a harmonious society. Together with “harmonious society” it marked the shift under Hu Jintao of socialism with Chinese characteristics and constitute his legacy tifa. Chinese scholars have argued that the “scientific outlook on development … embodies the worldview and methodology central to proper development” and “provides the theoretical basis and guidance for the building of a harmonious society”, while the latter “represents the concrete implementation of such a perspective” (Guo Jianning, 2006). The two phrases were together ratified into the CCP constitution at the 17th Party Congress in October 2007 ( Communist Party of China, 2007). The term was also associated with the building of a harmonious society in earlier documents, such as Wen’s 2006 and 2007 work reports (Wen Jiabao, 2006; 2007).
35 For a reiteration of this argument in scholarly guise, see Qin Zhiyong (2008).
other and make concerted efforts to better protect our only home – the Earth” (State Council of the PRC, 2011c).

With regards to the status of harmony, it is sometimes portrayed as a state that has already been achieved: China is a harmonious society.\textsuperscript{36} At other points, often in the same texts, it is portrayed as a distant or “lofty” goal, which will only be achieved after considerable hard work, learning and possible sacrifices.\textsuperscript{37} Sometimes the two positions seem to be held at the same time (State Council of the PRC, 2009a: IV).

In 2011 a second white paper was issued on China’s Peaceful Development (State Council of the PRC, 2011c), which has since been widely cited and emphasised in the PRC’s foreign policy work, including ministers’ and ambassadors’ speeches.\textsuperscript{38} This white paper reiterated the themes of the previous reports. It also placed renewed emphasis on the argument that “China’s Path of Peaceful Development Is a Choice Necessitated by History” (2011c: IV). In a section by that title, its authors reiterate the basic idea that this form of being in the world carries forward the Chinese historical and cultural tradition:

[t]he world has been believed to be a harmonious whole in the Chinese culture ever since the ancient times. This belief has a lasting impact on the thinking and acts of the Chinese nation, which is an important value that the Chinese people follow in handling interpersonal relationships, the relationship between man and nature and relations between different countries (State Council of the PRC, 2011c: IV).

\textsuperscript{36} This is the impression given by Wen’s 2006 work report, which states: “We need to consolidate and develop the current political situation of … harmony” (Wen Jiabao, 2006), and again in 2007 when he reported on the “harmonious social environment we enjoy” (Wen Jiabao, 2009). It was also the case in a number of white papers (State Council of the PRC, 2007: II; 2009a: preface, III; 2009c: V), including in areas like Xinjiang (State Council of the PRC, 2009c: V) and Tibet (State Council of the PRC, 2009d: conclusion), as well as in less senior officials’ speeches (for example Wang Xuejian, 2008).

\textsuperscript{37} Thus, after portraying harmony as something that only needs “consolidation”, Wen’s 2006 work report goes on to state that the government must “intensify efforts to build a harmonious society” (Wen Jiabao, 2006). Similar portrayals of harmony as a distant goal appear in a wide range of sources (State Council of the PRC, 2007: conclusion; 2009c: conclusion; 2010b: foreword).

\textsuperscript{38} The white paper itself frequently appears on embassies’ websites, more than any other document relating to harmonious world. It has been explicitly referred to in many speeches, including by ambassadors to the Nepal (Embassy of the PRC in FDR of Nepal, 2011) and the UK (Liu Xiaoming, 2011c). Embassies also frequently link to speeches and symposia held in China to draw attention to the white paper (Dai Bingguo, 2011; Embassy of the PRC in the USA, 2011; Yang Jiechi, 2011).
Significantly, it also elaborates in some more detail on the theme of difference in the party-state leadership’s vision of a harmonious world. Wen Jiabao’s 2006 Report on the Work of the Government merely stated: “[w]e will expand common interests with developed countries, deal with differences appropriately, and promote exchange and cooperation with them” (Wen Jiabao, 2006). A number of speeches have since developed the idea that “harmonious world” should build on the notion of “harmony with difference” or “harmony without uniformity” (he er butong 和而不同).39 This theme that can be recognised from Hu’s speech to the UN and was officially formalised in the 2011 White Paper:

    [t]he Chinese people have always cherished a world view of ‘unity without uniformity,’ ‘harmony between man and nature,’ and ‘harmony is invaluable.’ ... Under the influence of the culture of harmony, peace-loving has been deeply ingrained in the Chinese character.... Imbued with the belief that one should be as inclusive as the vast ocean which admits hundreds of rivers, the Chinese nation has embraced all that is fine in foreign cultures.... The Chinese ... respect different cultures and views, treat others in the same way as we expect to be treated, and do not impose our will upon others. We treat all foreign countries with courtesy, foster harmonious ties with neighbors and make friends with distant states. The Chinese people have inherited the fine tradition of Chinese culture of over 5,000 years and added to it new dimensions of the times (State Council of the PRC, 2011c: IV).40

39 Such speeches include Ambassador Wang Xuexian, to whom “Seeking harmony while acknowledging differences’ means that a country or an ethnic group, while preserving its own cultural heritage, should be open and tolerant to other civilizations.... In Chinese culture, harmony is underpinned by diversity and there will be no harmony without diversity” (Wang Xuexian, 2008). The theme is developed closely with the concept of peaceful co-existence and mutual respect between civilizations. This can be exemplified by way of comments by Ye Xiaowen, head of the State Administration for Religious Affairs of the PRC (SARA), in a speech delivered at Georgetown University: “if we do not allow the coexistence of different civilizations, there will be no peace in the world.... If we appreciate different cultures and encourage peaceful coexistence, we will be able to learn from others’ strengths and eventually build a harmonious world” (Ye Xiaowen in Xinhua, 2008). This theme thus recalls Hu’s focus on diversity of civilizations, which has been often repeated in his speeches (Hu Jintao, 2005a; Xinhua, 2009b).

40 Historical examples that are used to back up the claim that the Chinese are a naturally peaceful people include the elsewhere recurring examples of admiral Zheng He and the Silk Road: “The world-renowned Silk Road, for example, was a road of trade, cultural exchanges and peace, which testifies to the pursuit of friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation with other peoples by the ancient Chinese. The famous Ming Dynasty navigator Zheng He made seven voyages to the Western Seas, visiting over 30 countries and regions across Asia and Africa. He took along with him the cream of the Chinese culture and technology as well as a message of peace and friendship” (State Council of the PRC, 2011c: IV). For similar comments in policy discourse about Chinese people’s harmonious nature due to the purported 5000 years of harmonious civilization, see Wu Yi (2006).
Together with China’s “basic conditions” and its fundamental national and long-term interests, this cultural predisposition is said to have created the “innate force” driving China’s peaceful development (2011c: IV). Its vision of a harmonious world is again said to align with the “global trend”, where “those who go along with it will prosper and those who go against it will perish ... This is the general trend of the world and the common aspiration of all people (2011c: IV). Therefore, the international community should find “new perspectives from the angle of the community of common destiny” and pursue mutually beneficial cooperation (2011c: IV).

There is clearly an emphasis here on wanting to preserve diversity of some sort, but the proud declaration that the Chinese “nation has embraced all that is fine in foreign cultures” raises the question of the aspects of (foreign) cultures that were not deemed “fine” by Chinese power holders. Elsewhere, it is clear that the “mutual learning” and “integration” that the party-state calls “harmony” may have a decidedly less “equal” or “democratic” appearance than what is immediately obvious. When discussing the harmony of “ethnic unity”, for example, a 2009 white paper demands:

all China’s ethnic groups, in the big family of the unified motherland and on the basis of equality, are required to ... promote peaceful coexistence and harmonious development, continuously strengthen and develop socialist ethnic relations based on equality, solidarity, mutual assistance and harmony, devote all to the construction of socialist modernization, and make our country strong, our nation thrive and our people happy (State Council of the PRC, 2009a: III).

The proposition, then, is that all should be equal, but that they should be so according to the party-state’s standards (as expressed in slogans and concepts like “peaceful coexistence”, “harmonious development”, “mutual assistance and harmony” and “the construction of socialist modernization”). In the period that the harmonious society and world have been promoted, however, waves of riots and self-immolations carried out by members of China’s ethnic minorities should make it abundantly clear that not everyone wants to be equal on the Chinese party-state’s terms (Wong, 2009; Cui Jia et al., 2012).
Along similar lines, a white paper on *China's Political Party System* used “the multi-party cooperation system” to exemplify harmony with difference, because “[i]t reflects the fine cultural tradition of the Chinese nation, which features all-embracing and harmony while reserving differences” (State Council of the PRC, 2007: I). Although it certainly does allow for people not to join the CCP (which in fact consists of a privileged minority), it seems ludicrous to argue that China’s 60 years of CCP rule represents some form of equality between parties. Rather, it exemplifies how hierarchically organised the party-state version of “harmony with difference” is. In this hierarchical ordering of difference, other parties are reduced to rubber-stamping centrally made decisions in the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), and real opposition is staunchly and often violently opposed as in the cases of figures like Liu Xiaobo or the Dalai Lama. Both these critical individuals have been labelled as not “harmonious” by the party state, in efforts to delegitimise their respective causes.\(^{41}\)

At a few points, there seems to be a slip in official documents, and it is admitted that harmonious relations build on “active communication, enhanced cooperation and elimination of differences” (State Council of the PRC, 2010a: V).

What then of the relation of this policy discourse on harmonious world and the possibility of multiplicities? As we have seen, the party-state version of harmonious world has been deployed to “do” various concrete things in Chinese international politics. At the level of imagining difference, it appears to share our concern here with diversity and multiplicity. Units to which this diversity refers include states, but also civilisations and cultures. These are described in ways that correspond with David Kerr’s “blending diversity under universalism” (Kerr, 2011: 171), which tends towards an imagination of difference as hierarchically ordered, and sometimes as something that should be eliminated. This particular organisation of multiplicity is moreover aligned with some spatial and temporal terms, most notably spatial “opening up” and temporal “progress” and “modernisation”. This imagination of time and space coincides with the idea of one-world holism, and the idea of a *Geist* of sorts,

\(^{41}\) For the case of the Dalai Lama, see Xinhua (2009a) for an example, and Callahan (2011: 173) for a discussion related to “harmonious world”. For a press release which equates supporting Liu with not being harmonious, see Embassy of PRC to the US (Embassy of the PRC in the US, 2010).
the “wish of mankind” or “the trend of the times in the world”, at the end of which we find harmony. The future harmonious world is envisaged as an “inevitable choice”, and China is imagined as having a privileged position in the construction of this future because of its purported harmonious nature based on Chinese history. It is inevitable, yet needs to be constructed and fostered. The implications of the alignment of harmony with these different terms will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Against this background, “harmonious world” is said by some scholars to indicate “an increasingly confident China relinquishing its aloofness to participate and undertake greater responsibilities in international affairs” (Sow Keat Tok and Zheng Yongnian, 2007: 4.4). Nonetheless, the term remains to a significant extent a “catch all” phrase of friendly connotations. Some of the political terms that circulate in domestic academic and policy debates draw on Chinese historical concepts in a way that resists efficient use in foreign policy precisely because they lack resonance in foreign language, etymology and culture. One, albeit not the only, reason for the decline of previously popular term “peaceful rise” was the association of “rise” with “threat” in Chinese as well as non-Chinese discourses (Suettinger, 2005: 6; Glaser and Medeiros, 2007: 304). In parallel, the concept of Tianxia or “All-under-heaven”, which I discuss in chapter 3, is unlikely to ever make greater impact in documents of foreign policy because the term makes little sense in English language and to Western understandings.

“Harmonious world”, on the other hand, may be useful precisely because of its vague and elusive implications, that nonetheless speak to both Chinese and non-Chinese cultural sensibilities. Indeed, “who could argue against global peace and prosperity?” (Callahan, 2011: 262).

**STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

The remainder of this thesis is organised in five chapters. Chapter 1 explains the methodology and method of my approach to tracing tifa across contexts, looking for both the doing and undoing of things with words in Chinese politics. It moreover explains my choice of contexts to explore in the thesis, and outlines the sources and methods of data collection.
Having explained the basic assumptions of my methodology, chapter 2 outlines in more detail the theoretical challenge of thinking time and space to which this thesis responds. I trace the emergence of the allochrony problematique, or the difficulty to think coeval multiplicities, and the call to meet the challenge this presents for rethinking time and space. I suggest that philosophers Jean Baudrillard and Jacques Derrida can be read in ways that make them promising for negotiating the allochrony problematique.

In chapter 3 I follow this problematique in the academic literatures that came about in the wake of Hu Jintao’s launch of his harmonious policy discourse, literatures that deployed the concept in an academic setting and asked what a harmonious world might look like. Specifically, I explore the assumptions about time, space and difference that underpin the deployment of “harmonious world” in these debates. I examine whether academic texts that in different ways engage the notion of “harmonious world” have been able to avoid allochronic thinking. This problematic way of conceptualising difference has been criticised as typical of “Western” thinking. The question is, do the academic debates that engage “harmonious world” against the backdrop of ancient Chinese thought offer an alternative? Do they offer a way to meet the challenge of thinking “coeval multiplicities”? In answering this question I identify two common imaginations of time and space, or “cosmologies”, that underpin the ways in which academics have written about China’s relation to the harmonious world since its launch as an official policy term in 2005. The first is what I call a “unit-based cosmology”, that of space as calculable bounded space, as containers of societies. The second is what has been referred to as a space “with no outside” (无外), what I call here a “holistic cosmology”. I examine how these two ways of organising time and space relate to the allochrony problematique.

Chapter 4 continues by tracing the two cosmologies through the Chinese world fair that took place in Shanghai in 2010, and which made heavy reference to the idea of a harmonious world. It investigates, through an examination of Expo 2010 Shanghai China, how these two cosmologies order universal/particular, time/space and self/other through the notion of harmonious world. After excavating the effect of
harmony at the Expo, I argue that we need to move beyond the reading of mega events as simple representation and ideology and read it also as simulation and simulacra. Reading the Chinese world fair as a simulacrum of world order can provide different ways of relating “the West” to its “other country” China. I examine this relation through asking what it means to be the fair: Where is the world fair? When is the world fair? Who is the world fair? I show how reading the world/fair as simulacrum disrupts the fair’s notions of inside and outside, now and then, subject and object to the point where these terms are no longer workable.

In chapter 5 I explore some of the creative forms of discursive resistance that have grown in popularity as a way of simultaneously avoiding and criticising Chinese online censorship, also known as having “been harmonised” (bei hexie le 被和併了). In the context of the satirical online spoofing culture known as egao, the practice of using humorous homonyms to mock the Chinese censorship, and its attempts at “harmonising” the Internet, has received increasing international attention in recent years. These particular homonyms have become known as “national treasures” (guobao 国宝). In the final chapter I trace one of these national treasures, the “rivercrab” (héxiè 河蟹). In Chinese language, “rivercrab” is pronounced almost exactly the same as “harmony” (héxié 和谐), making it a playful way of simultaneously criticising and avoiding “being harmonised”. I trace iterations of this rivercrab in order to bring back in elements denied by Hu’s harmony, significantly the question of difference and competition implied in the question “whose harmony?” Through this reading, I aim to shed light on the doings and undoings of both harmonious world and coeval multiplicities.

The conclusion returns to the research questions outlined above and discusses my key finding: that in the contexts I examine “harmonious world” organises multiplicity allochronically. Rather than offer an alternative political cosmology, official visions of “harmonious world” replace “the West” with “China” at the head of an imagined historical queue. As an effect, alterity and difference in the here-now and the openness of the future are denied. This in turn makes the political unthinkable. The conclusion also outlines the potential and limits for thinking about both harmony and coeval
multiplicities – its successful failures. The “doing” of harmonious world I describe is also undone by its very own logic. Most importantly, as an effect of the mass-proliferation of “harmonious world”, the term has amassed so much meaning that the possibility of using it as a meaningful concept has disappeared. The fantasy and reality of harmonious world have collapsed into one another and the seduction of the concept has been lost. The threat posed by proliferating harmonisation is not only the policing of boundaries: cracking down on dissidents, blocking words online. A more spectacular threat to harmony comes from the excess of communicating harmony itself, which destroys the illusion of the real in the concept. In this sense mass-communication of harmony is dangerous on a larger metaphysical plane. Ultimately, the most important contribution of this thesis is to bring the political back into the harmonious world concept in order to elucidate the negotiation of danger and necessity of multiplicity.
1 Approach, method and sources: Doing and undoing things with words in Chinese politics

The purpose of this thesis is to examine what the term “harmonious world” has done, where it has been deployed since Hu's speech to the UN. The present chapter provides the conceptual foundation for my exploration of the term. In order to explain and motivate my approach to the concept, I begin by outlining how most scholars who have studied “harmonious world” have approached it. I then explain my own methodology, or better perhaps my approach of and to doing and undoing things with words in politics. This includes an elaboration of the methodological assumptions about language that underpin it, as well as the way I think about strategy and the role of theory in this project. I then explain my choice of contexts in which I study “harmonious world”, as well as my choice of methods and sources in exploring these.

PRIOR APPROACHES TO STUDYING “HARMONIOUS WORLD”: MEANINGFUL HARMONY

Before I elaborate my own way of reading the “harmonious world” concept, how have other scholars approached it? In the academic literatures that have analyzed “harmonious world” since its official launch in 2005, several scholars argue that the term indicates a new level of assertiveness and policy activism (Sow Keat Tok and Zheng Yongnian, 2007: 4.4; Yao Yongmei, 2007), with greater initiative, “energetic posture and style”, “readiness, braveness and political will” by the PRC government to pursue its foreign policy (Di Dongsheng, 2007: 10-11). In this manner, the term has been described as the foundation on which contemporary Chinese foreign policy is built and hailed as “China’s first conceptual illustration of a future world order” (Su Hao, 2009: 29).

The approaches to the study of harmonious world are varied, and it is impossible to do them all justice within the scope of this chapter. I discuss their spatiotemporal

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This claim is problematic. It involves a stark denial of Chinese pasts, including that of the earlier Confucians who wrote about the harmonious world from which current policy borrows heavily, as well as that of modern PRC foreign policy concepts under Mao and Deng. Nonetheless, this way of discussing “harmonious world” is not uncommon and has contributed to the popularity of the term.
underpinnings in chapter 3. At this point, I discuss simply their approach to studying the meaning of harmonious world, where a majority of these analyses falls into either of two approaches. The first approach takes the relative vagueness of the harmonious world concept as a problem to be solved and tries to find out what the term really means (Blanchard, 2008: 165; Tao et al., 2010b: 4). It stresses the absence of a proper understanding of the term as a lack to be filled, calling for academics to find out its “specific meaning” (Guo Sujian and Blanchard, 2008b: 2). In such analyses the task of scholars is to “investigate why and when China favors particular policy tools”, “conduct comparative analyses” to determine the “varying effectiveness” of the term and to what extent it can “empower or constrain foreign policy decision makers” (Guo Sujian and Blanchard, 2008b: 16; Ding Sheng, 2008).

Conducting such analyses has led scholars to detect various “new” things about China’s harmonious world policy. Some argue, as indicated above, that the term designates a new Chinese assertiveness and confidence in international relations (Sow Keat Tok and Zheng Yongnian, 2007; Su Hao, 2009). Others further argue that harmonious world is different in rejecting the Washington Consensus view on economic development, that it sees world order as stabilised and pacified by institutions, that it reflects ideology, pragmatism and philosophy in tandem, and that it uses novel means (multilateralism) to build a stronger foundation of capabilities (Di Dongsheng, 2007: 12-14, see also Guo Sujian and Blanchard, 2008b: 7). Its explicitly international economic themes are said to include integration, support for the WTO system as well as increased “cooperation and exchange (that is equal and mutually beneficial)”, even if practice does not always live up to these aims (Blanchard, 2008: 170, 171).

On this understanding, China’s new level of involvement in UN peacekeeping, its ability to draft codes and proposals of cooperation with the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the 2007 joint terrorism exercise of the SCO have amongst other things been attributed to
the concept of harmonious world. Where there is tension, it has consisted primarily of concern that China may be overly confident, that China is not (yet) in a position where the state is so powerful and in control of domestic issues that it is capable of doing more (Glaser, 2007; Guo Sujian and Blanchard, 2008b: 9).

The second approach focuses on how a harmonious world can be built or realised. This approach presupposes that harmonious world has a specific meaning, often to the point where this meaning is left undefined. It moreover assumes harmonious world to be benign and good. The question in this line of enquiry, then, is not whether or not China should build a harmonious world, but how this can best or most quickly be done.

Some of this second type of literature displays a strong belief in the capacity of harmonious world to solve the world’s problems. One commentator, for example, argues that “harmonious world” builds on the idea of benevolence and compassion and that “if people all over the world have practiced compassion, within one hundred years, violent events would be greatly reduced. There would be no more evil incidents like the September 11, 2001, attack on the United States” (Shi Zhongwen, 2008: 39).

This approach to studying harmonious world is largely part of the Chinese exceptionalist line of thought that was outlined in the introduction to this thesis (see for example Liu Guoli, 2008: 151).

One example of how this type of argument tends to develop can be found in a text by Shi Zhongwen, according to whom a historical focus on harmony has “made the mind of the Chinese peaceful and tolerant” (2008: 42). Phenomena cited by Shi as “historical evidence of the harmonious coexistence of different nations” include amongst other things: the variation of dialects in China (Shi Zhongwen, 2008: 48-9); the absence of crusades in Chinese history (Shi Zhongwen, 2008: 50); the worshiping of several saints in the same temple hall (Shi Zhongwen, 2008: 50); the popularity in China of McDonald’s and KFC (Shi Zhongwen, 2008: 53); and the claim that most areas of the world have humiliated “the Jews and the Gypsies”, but that “the long history of

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China is void of such records” (Shi Zhongwen, 2008: 49). Together, these and other phenomena are said to indicate that the Chinese nation “takes harmony as its roots and the culture takes pride in harmony” (Shi Zhongwen, 2008: 47). Importantly Shi (and other scholars who emphasise the peaceful nature of “the mind” of Chinese people) stresses that this does not imply fragility or cowardice, that “the Chinese people ... not only fear no war, but also possess superb theories of war and strategies and tactics” (Shi Zhongwen, 2008: 42, 45). Shi ends the text in the hope that China will “become a model of harmony and vigor in the civilization of mankind” (Shi Zhongwen, 2008: 59).

This approach, like the official policy on harmonious world, typically locates the origins of the term in “Chinese civilization” and its purported uninterrupted “5000 years of history”, emphasising China’s exceptional status because it has “a longer history and greater achievements” than other countries or civilisations (Qin Zhiyong, 2008: 68). The aim is to show how the focus on harmony in Chinese history will (naturally) lead to a different (and better) international order as China becomes more powerful (see Kang, 2007 and Jacques, 2009 for examples, and Callahan, 2012 for a critique). The purported Chinese historical tendency or culture of harmony and cooperation is said to make it different from other great powers, most explicitly an American tendency towards expansionism (Wang Yiwei, 2006) and protectionism (Wang Hongtao, 2008: 155). China, on this view, is naturally harmonious and peaceful, and the task ahead is to make others understand this “truth” (Liu Jianfei, 2006; Yu Xiaofeng and Wang Jiangli, 2006; Ni Shixiong and Qian Xuming, 2008: 125). Following this line of thought, it is not uncommon for policy makers and scholars alike to state that when China’s ideas of a harmonious world are properly understood, belief in the China threat will wane (see comments in People’s daily online, 2006). Like the previous line of thought, then, this approach stresses the absence of proper understanding of the term as a lack to be filled – the only difference is that Chinese people already have access to this meaning, whilst foreigners need to be taught.

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44 This is a highly questionable claim, at best.
The claim that there is a Chinese essential culture that is by nature peaceful, harmonious, benevolent and non-violent is problematic in many ways on both conceptual and empirical levels. Such claims have been criticised from a range of theoretical and historical-empirical viewpoints, by prominent critics such as Alastair I. Johnston (1995), Yu Bin (2008), Wang Yuan-Kang (2011) and William A. Callahan (2012). Recalling the violent riots, crackdowns and attempts at isolation of border regions like Tibet (Human Rights Watch, 2010) and Xinjiang (AFP, 2011) during the phase of promoting “inter-ethnic harmony” should temper such belief, as should the fact that most of those who argue that China is by nature peaceful draw their evidence from the aptly named “Warring-states period”. Nonetheless, this trope of the naturally peaceful China remains popular and is repeated in different versions in a majority of texts on harmonious world, both in Chinese and in English languages.

THE APPROACH OF THIS THESIS: DOING AND UNDOING THINGS WITH WORDS

There are two principal ways, then, in which previous studies of “harmonious world” have approached the concept. One approach asks what harmony really means. The other takes its meaning to be both given and benign, and asks instead how a harmonious world can be built. Both these approaches rest on the assumption that “harmonious world” can have, and indeed has, one single meaning, which in turn can be discovered by careful study of the behaviour and speech-acts of the PRC leadership, or of Chinese historical-philosophical texts.

In this thesis, however, I ask not what “harmonious world” really means, but rather what it does in terms of time, space and multiplicity. Asking about harmonious world in these different terms can allow us to think differently about its politics and its futures. In fact, I claim that “harmonious world” does not have one single true meaning that can be discovered. This is a claim that I will return to throughout this

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45 The study of “doing things with words” draws on a rich tradition within the humanities, with this formulation being used particularly in the footsteps of John L. Austin (1979[1961]). This is not to say that this tradition focuses time, space and multiplicity in the way that I do in this thesis, which is why I leave a more detailed discussion thereof to others.
thesis, but for now, let me begin by explaining this basic tenet by way of Jacques Derrida’s discussion of signifier and signified.

**Doing things with words: Derrida and language**

Derrida has critiqued, drawing on Ferdinand de Saussure (1960), the correspondence theory of language where any sign consists of both a signifier (a word) and a signified (the thing itself). In this theory every word means something specific. Put differently, a signifier signifies a signified. Derrida has disturbed this logic by showing that every signifier, or word, signifies not the thing itself, but another signifier. That signifier in turn signifies another signifier, which in turn signifies another signifier, and so on. The chain of signifiers is what Derrida calls a “trace”, which reveals the absence of the signified, the absence of the thing itself (Derrida, 1976 [1967]: 61, 73).

Looking at “harmonious world” through this logic changes the way it makes sense to approach and study the concept. When a scholar (or foreign policy maker, or some other commentator) says or writes the words “harmonious world” it is to signify a specific thing (“harmonious world” *itself*) even if this thing is as yet only partly constructed or even utopian. However, when the scholar tries to explain what “harmonious world” is, in itself, he or she can only refer to more signifiers, such as “cooperation”, “assertiveness”, “pragmatism”, and so on. This is the case for the scholars whose arguments I outlined in the previous section, and for the author of this thesis. Therefore, although many scholars try to make “harmonious world” *in itself* present, what their writing actually reveals is the impossibility of making the thing itself present in language. What we see, then, is not the practice or ideal of “harmonious world” *itself* at the origin of the chain of signifiers (cooperation, assertiveness, pragmatism), but the absence of harmonious world and the impossibility of presenting harmonious world *as such.*

Because meaning, in this way, is always deferred (from one word to the next, *ad infinitum*) there can be no true meaning of “harmonious world” in the way that the literatures outlined in the previous section assume. Harmonious world does not exist

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46 This reading draws on Bulley (2009).
as a thing in itself. Rather, "harmonious world" is what emerges in the interweaving of chains of signifiers with no signified: a text (Derrida, 1987 [1972]: 26).

Therefore, I read "harmonious world" as text. This implies, in a very particular way, that "harmonious world" loses, or rather defers, its meaning. This, however, does not imply that it does not have concrete effects, because a term or text can operate and do things even if it does not have one specific meaning. As we shall see throughout this thesis, it moreover does not mean that there are not attempts to fix and stabilise the ‘true’ meaning of harmony. Finally, it does not mean that we should only take into account spoken or written words – indeed, this thesis relies on images, artefacts, architecture, videos, music, as well as other visual and digital materials for its data.

The point of studying "harmonious world" as text is rather to recognise how profoundly our making sense of the world is bound up in language, and how this in turn has great effects on our being in the world and how we relate to others.

Moreover, this language through which we make sense of the world can only make sense to us insofar as it can do so also in a different context, even if the communicator or receiver is not there then. In other words, it must be repeatable in other contexts, or as Derrida would say, iterable (Derrida, 1988: 9). This means we can remove its repeatable meaning from the specific context in which it was first deployed and "recognize other possibilities in it by inscribing it or grafting it onto other chains" (Derrida, 1988: 9, cf. Massey, 2005: 19). This is why “iterable” means both repeatable and transformative. The purported or intended meaning of a term like "harmonious world" is structurally capable of being lost or changed, so that it means something other than the author’s intention. Indeed, this is not only possible, but inevitable. For this reason “harmony” does not have one fixed meaning, but we can play with it, graft it into other chains of signification that can reveal meanings that were always already potentially there in harmony in the first place. In this way, what “harmonious world” means, or rather does, is deferred from one context where it is deployed to another. This implies, moreover, that it can do something different in different contexts.

Therefore “harmony”, like any other term, can mean, or rather do, various things in various contexts. This shifts the investigation from prior scholarly focus on finding the
"specific meaning" of the concept, to its function and structuring consequences – from what it means to what it does.

**Doing things with words in Chinese politics: The set formulation**

Derrida, of course, is not alone in understanding the central importance of language to how we live in the world. There is a rich tradition of study concerned with “doing things with words” in the humanities and social sciences. Key figures in China have also long stressed the importance of language. Confucius, for example, argued in the *Analects* that when names are not correct, state affairs will not be successful and ordinary people will not know how to do what is right. This is why “the Prince is never casual in his choice of words” (*Analects*: 12, iii, 5-6, cited in Schoenhals, 1992). This statement certainly applied to the Prince of the communist revolution, Chairman Mao Zedong. A key tenet of his own thought was: “one single [correct, MS] formulation, and the whole nation will flourish; one single [incorrect, MS] formulation, and the whole nation will decline” (Mao Zedong, 1967 [1963]: final supplement, 120, cited in Schoenhals, 1992: 3).

Since the communist revolution, a particular form of linguistic power has gained strength in a form of formalised language called *tifa* (提法), which may be variously translated as set phrases, formulations, mantras or slogans. It is this form of set formulation that Mao is referring to in the quotation above. The practice of formulating set phrases has continued to this day, and has been a way for each generation of Chinese leadership to stamp their mark on Chinese politics. Formalised political language exists, of course, in most if not all countries or cultures, but in China these formulations are extraordinarily prevalent and important. As one commentator notes with regards to *tifa*: “in a political system that is closed and opaque, these are more than just catch phrases – they define the goals of the nation” (Beck, 2007). “Harmonious world” is one of these many formulations, that has been central to Chinese foreign policy under Hu Jintao.
One of the earliest writings that discussed the particular power of these Chinese formulations is Michael Schoenhals’ *Doing things with words in Chinese politics* (1992). Schoenhals argues:

> [b]y proscribing some formulations and prescribing others, they [the CCP propaganda apparatus] set out to regulate what is being said and what is being written – and by extension what is being done. (Schoenhals, 1992: 3)

He argues that formulations have been deployed in China in an attempt to make the party-state’s language the only legitimate medium of political expression (Schoenhals, 1992: 3, see also Apter and Saich, 1994: 5, 68, 108, 114). As such, he takes it to represent one of the most aggressive aspects of CCP propaganda (Schoenhals, 1992: 3).

Schoenhals extracts from CCP’s own reflexive texts some components that dictate the way its set phrases are formed. First, appropriate formulations contribute to the attainment of a specific goal (Schoenhals, 1992: 8). Second, the CCP emphasises that formulations should be scientific (Schoenhals, 1992: 9, see also Apter and Saich, 1994: 108). However, the scientific nature of a phrase, Schoenhals demonstrates, is not judged by criteria of scientific verifiability or truthfulness, but according to its political utility. Therefore “[a] formulation used to produce a certain effect upon feelings, thoughts, or actions of a target audience is regarded as scientific if the effect is indeed forthcoming. ‘Science’ is what appears to work” (Schoenhals, 1992: 9-10).

Schoenhals moreover shows how the nature and intensity of CCP control over appropriate and inappropriate language has fluctuated throughout its rule. Immediately after it seized power in 1949 there was an attempt to stamp out all “unhealthy language”, followed by a reaction against “excessive formalisation” by the mid-1950s, in order to reach its extreme during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). At this point Lin Biao, then Vice-Chairman and Mao’s unofficial successor,

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47 David E. Apter and Tony Saich have shown this focus on “health” and “cleansing” of the body politic to be a marked trait from the initial consolidation of the Chinese communist movement as a Maoist party at Yan’an (1936-1947). It was no accident, they claim, that Mao’s first published writing was concerned with the need to purify and restore collective health (Apter and Saich, 1994: 92, 102, 104).
declared: “one sentence of Chairman Mao’s is worth ten thousand of ours”.

Between 1966 and 1970, Schoenhals explains, the use of set phrases reduced the ten thousand alternative sentences that individuals may choose to express themselves to “the one” – and not just any “one”, but the one that Mao was recorded as having said (Schoenhals, 1992: 19).

In this way, the set phrase form restricts what is said through limiting form, the precise words in which things can be said. Schoenhals draws on Maurice Bloch’s words to argue “this type of restriction is ... much more powerful than a direct one on content, since it goes right through the whole range of possible responses” (Bloch, 1975: 5, cited in Schoenhals, 1992: 21). Thus, on the one hand, proscribing certain words and formulations makes it difficult to introduce new concepts and reformulate ideas of what things could be. On the other hand, to Schoenhals, prescribing the repetition of a limited number of “scientific” set phrases “promotes acceptance of already existing conceptions” (1992: 21). On this view, the type of set phrase that is under scrutiny here not only inhibits the emergence of something new, or other, but also reinforces that which is already established and conventional. To Schoenhals, this is how “the CCP achieves far more with far less by manipulating the form rather than the content of discourse” (1992: 21).

Importantly, the establishment of the PRC that brought this language practice into the shape we see today was explicitly and from the outset engaged in the kind of “world making” that I explore. In the spring of 1949, at the Second Plenum of the Seventh CCP Central Committee, Mao expressed that the communists of China had shown themselves eminently capable of destroying an “old world”, and had now come to the point where they needed to create a “new world”. Moreover, Schoenhals refers to the web of intelligibility and possible expression that is formed around these set phrases in terms of a “semantic map of the real world represented by these formulations” (Schoenhals, 1992: 27). This foregrounds my focus on doing time and

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48 This quote from Lin Biao can be found in a collection of his quotes by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) General Political Department (1970: 17, cited in Schoenhals, 1992: 19). The formalised language of this period has been discussed in a number of books that take delight in the humorous effects the awkward use of set phrases often had (see for example Jin Chunming et al., 1989).

49 Tianjin shi geming weiyuanhui zhengzhibu (1969 [05.03.1949], cited in Schoenhals, 1992: 103).
space with words in Chinese politics, as well as the question of distinction between reality and representation that I will discuss at greater length in the next chapter and in chapter 4. It should also be noted that the Chinese state that deploys these set phrases is very epistemologically realist, carrying a broader Marxist legacy involving a trust in science and truth, or as Apter and Saich have put it “‘truth’ over open-ended choice” (Apter and Saich, 1994: 5, see also 68, 108, 114). So, with regards to the claim of China’s alleged peaceful nature, state discourse simply treats this claim as a fact, and if you do not understand or agree with it, you are simply wrong. On the one hand, then, there is strong awareness of the ability to do things with words in Chinese politics. On the other hand, and simultaneously, there is an equally strong insistence on the “true” and “scientific” meaning of “correct” formulations. These are the paradoxical practices of “new speak” that may be involved at some level of all language, and that are certainly expressed in Chinese set phrases like “harmonious world”.

**Doing and undoing things with words**

Schoenhals’ book is a wonderfully well-researched piece of work, and my examination of “harmonious world” owes much to his research. However, I want to argue that there is something else going on in the prescription and proliferation of this and other set phrases in contemporary China. Certainly, the proscription of words may have an inhibiting effect on the emergence of alternatives (other alternatives, multiplicity). And certainly, the CCP prescribes its set phrases, “harmonious world” included, in order to reinforce a discourse and logic that is favourable to the existing system. However, the prescription of these set phrases also does something else that the party-state leadership never intended and apparently remains oblivious to. The party-state is not only doing things with words in Chinese politics, but it is simultaneously undoing things and having its own text undone.

“Harmonious world” is often an aspirational and normative concept, the Chinese party-state’s articulation of the kind of world order that it wants to build (jianshe 建设). To the party-state, a harmonious world is something that should be built, that is in the process of being built, that is and should be in a state of growth. A key mechanism
for facilitating its growth is the communication of this concept and its ideals to the Chinese people and to the world. If anyone thinks of China as a threat, it is because they have not properly understood its ideas of harmonious world (People's Daily, 2006). The solution that the party-state has envisaged to this lack of understanding is more and better communication.\(^{50}\) Therefore, the call to build a harmonious society and a harmonious world has, since harmony was launched as an official policy concept, been spread \textit{en masse} throughout Chinese media, public discourse and public space. Instances of this proliferating harmony are the focus of examination in this thesis.

Some scholars who do not agree with the official deployment of harmonious world have shown their disagreement through simply refusing to use the term. In this way, they have used silence, the refusal to further proliferate the concept, as a way to resist it. One of the things this thesis will argue is that harmonious world has also countered itself by way of its excessive mass-proliferation. Jean Baudrillard, whose work will be instrumental to my analysis and will be further discussed below, has written of the effects of excess in many forms. One form that will be of significance to the development of this thesis is his writing on excess in the form of cancer: “hypervitality in only one direction” (Baudrillard, 1990 [1983]: 12). Just as cancer cells multiply and spread through a biological system through growth and multiplication, so too will we see how “harmonious world” proliferates as an endlessly repeated promise, communicated again and again through the system, \textit{en masse}.

However, as with cancer, the excessive spread and growth of this promise may backfire against the system in ways that the promoters of harmony have not intended or foreseen. I will show, particularly in chapter 5, how harmony, like cancer, has gone from building or production to excessive hyperproduction, uncontrolled proliferation, excrescence and outgrowths that come to threaten, or \textit{undo}, the promise of a future harmonious world order.

In Schoenhals’ study, the formalised language of the set phrase becomes “a form of power for the already powerful”:

[only a few CCP leaders are able to manipulate rather than be manipulated by formulations, that is, to have the formulations they favor be designated ‘appropriate’ and the formulations they disapprove of be labelled ‘inappropriate’ (Schoenhals, 1992: 22).

Although Schoenhals’ point is well taken, I do not think we need to stop at acknowledging and studying the attempt by those in powerful party-state positions to fix language and what it does. Following Baudrillard, the doing of things with words in Chinese politics may also carry with it an undoing of things, with the very same words. This potential of texts to be undone by their very own logic merits further attention. Another philosopher who focuses not only on doing, but on undoing is Derrida. The broad spirit of Derrida’s work derives from his “general strategy of deconstruction” (Derrida, 1987 [1972]: 41), which relies on a “double movement” of simultaneous reversal and displacement of terms that are produced in apparent binary opposition in a given text.51 The need for the first movement of overturning rests on a recognition that:

in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with a peaceful coexistence of a vis-à-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment (Derrida, 1987 [1972]: 41).

Importantly, however, this is not a “once and for all” resolution, but a move we need to continuously go through since the hierarchical binary re-establishes itself (Derrida, 1987 [1972]: 113). Moreover, the second move of displacement is equally important as it moves towards a new term which is not part of the previous hierarchy (Derrida, 1987 [1972]: 42). Both these moves are thus crucial to the “double gesture” of deconstruction, one of the two on its own is not enough (Derrida, 1988: 21).

Although this may be thought of as a strategy of sorts, deconstruction is something that takes place in texts, rather than something that is applied to them – it is the assumptions that are already there in the text that come to undermine it. If this is the case, the act of reading text can, in the words of Maja Zehfuss, be understood as “another act of writing” (2007: 23). Thus, to Derrida:

> [o]ne can read the same text – which thus never exists ‘in itself’ – as a testimony that is said to be serious and authentic, or as an archive, or as a document, or as a symptom – or as a work of literary fiction that simulates all of the positions that we have just enumerated (Derrida, 2000: 29).

What this means is not that a text can be read to give any meaning, or to do any thing, but again that no text has one single pre-determined meaning that one can uncover. Put differently, multiple possible doings are always already there in a text, and responsibility for what the text means, or rather does, falls on both “writer” and “reader” (or following Zehfuss perhaps better “the other writer”). My reading/writing of harmonious world, Derrida, Baudrillard and the other texts under scrutiny, is similarly not intended to uncover their one “true” meaning or doing, but rather to pose a challenge.

**Strategy of excess**

Formed in a dialogue with Saussurean linguistics, Nietzsche, Marxism and structuralism, both Derrida and Baudrillard write of a “double reading” or “reversal” of sorts from which I draw inspiration in formulating my own challenge. In Derrida’s deconstruction, this double reading consists of a reading of a given text as closely as possible to its own logic, but then also with attention to the way deconstruction takes place in it, how the text’s logic works against itself. Through such reading we see how a text deconstructs via the double movement of reversal and displacement of binary terms at work within the text.

Baudrillard does something similar in his “reversibility”, an “absolute weapon” against determination and teleology (Baudrillard, 1990 [1983]: 82), what Coulter has written of as Baudrillard’s “one great thought” running through all the writing of his prolific career (Coulter, 2004). Reversibility is a kind of “evil spirit” in Baudrillard’s thought
that ensures that every system, like the texts Derrida was concerned with, can and will be overturned, precisely by its own functioning (Baudrillard, 2005 [2004], see also Coulter in Smith, 2010: 181-3). Reversibility is thus deployed against the modern notion of the irreversibility of time, history and teleological progress (Baudrillard, 1988 [1987]), a poetic reversibility that is itself always already open to reversal (Zurbrugg, 1997, see also Coulter in Smith, 2010: 183). Indeed, some have commented on Baudrillard’s approach to theory as “a form of deconstruction rather than simple destructiveness” and drawn parallels between his “seduction” and Derrida’s *différence*.52 In Baudrillard’s work, various phenomena act outside, across or against the symbolic order that I will describe as “simulation” (including what he terms symbolic violence, the fatal, Evil, illusion and impossible exchange), but “as with Derrida the new term never fully displaces the earlier ones” (Hegarty, 2004: 10).

I thus read both Derrida and Baudrillard as emphasising the possibility of a double reading of tensions at play in language – and in turn the play with this tension as a strategy of sorts.53 Throughout this thesis I will point towards what Baudrillard would term the “objective irony” that “arises from within things themselves”, from a system “functioning against itself” (Baudrillard, 1987). This focus on systems is shared by Derrida who, following Heidegger, insists that deconstruction always has to do with systems and their destruction so as to disclose other “possibilities of arrangement” (Derrida, 1995 [1989]-b: 212).

Together, these approaches amount to what may be thought of as the strategy of this thesis. In a “hyper-real” world of proliferation, which I will argue is what we are dealing with, traditional approaches that Baudrillard calls “banal theory” – that resist evil with good and falsity with truth, where the subject considers itself more cunning than the object it critiques – are no longer workable (Baudrillard, 1990 [1983]). In “fatal strategy”, in contrast, “the system’s own logic turns into the best weapon against ... its own logic of perfection” (Baudrillard, 2001: 126). Baudrillard explains this move

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52 For such a reference, see Hegarty (2004: 7).
53 By using the word “strategy” I do not mean to imply the separation of agent and target (subject and object), or the causal relation between them, that some have taken the term to imply. It could equally well be called a “tactic” (Bleiker, 2000: 212).
from banal to fatal theory through the analogous move from the double spiral to the Möbius strip.\footnote{A Möbius strip is a surface with only one side and one boundary component. One can easily be made through taking a strip of paper, giving it a half-twist and attaching the ends to each other to form a loop.} Whereas the former included two opposed paradigms, in the latter “the reversibility of surfaces” cannot be resolved. Instead, left becomes right and the “simulation destructive of the system” folds without control into one “internal to the system” (Baudrillard, 1983 [1978]: 106, see also Rajan, 2002: 273).

Baudrillard tries to access this through a form of “provocation” that “plays (along) with the system by accelerating its logic so as to ‘precipitate’ it towards its end” (Rajan, 2002: 271):

> [o]ne goes therefore in the same direction as the text – but one accelerates, one goes much faster towards the end of the text. And one plays on the logic itself to be able … to reach a point beyond it, so as to make the system reveal itself more clearly…. One produces … meaning as if it arises from the system (even if in fact the system lacks meaning) in order precisely to play that meaning against the system itself (Baudrillard, 1987: 52, 40-1, cited in Rajan, 2002: 271).

Like Tilottama Rajan, I read this passage as resonating with Derrida’s account of deconstruction as using “the instruments or stones available in the house” against “the edifice” itself (Derrida, 1982 [1972]: 135).

I draw on this way of reading on several levels. First of all, I make a double reading of the concept of “harmony” within each chapter. I read each “text” closely to remain true to its own logic and purported message. In chapter 3 these are academic texts on China’s harmonious world. In chapter 4, they are the symbols, layout, architecture and texts produced at the Shanghai Expo. In chapter 5 they are the Chinese characters for “harmony”. In each case I read an intended message within the text’s own logic, but then perform a second reading, which decodes the text “otherwise” than that purported message. In my chapter on the Expo, for example, I read it first in terms of representation and then as simulation. This multiple reading strategy is also at play between the different chapters of the thesis, where each supplements and defers the meaning of the other.
Together these readings perform a take on Baudrillard’s “fatal theory”, which involves an acquiescence to the power of the “object” of my study in the hope of pushing its meanings to their limits so that they collapse or are reversed. On this understanding I follow what Marc LaFountain has called Baudrillard’s “ethics of excess” (LaFountain, 2008). I give in to harmony. Rather than bin it, I recycle it, again and again. I comply with the demand that everything should be harmonious and so I read harmony anywhere and everywhere – however impossible, I try to seek out all its meanings and doings. I follow it in a way that hopes to take its demands to their limits, where excessive following becomes transgressive to the demands themselves. Thus pursuing the object according to its provocation has the potential of making it “obese” or “overripe” with meaning to the point where it collapses or reverses “under the weight of its own desire and machinations” (LaFountain, 2008). As pointed out with reference to Derrida’s deconstruction, this reversal cannot be a “once and for all” – as soon as my object may be seduced and reversed, it will mutate, metastasise and return once again in recycled form.

Through deconstruction and reversibility, both Derrida and Baudrillard thus emphasise the point I am making that the system itself (here “harmony”) contains the seed of its own destruction. It itself produces that which threatens it. This thinking runs through the entirety of the thesis, but I develop it further in chapter 5, where I draw on the two writers’ thought on cancer and the autoimmune, to show how “harmonious world” produces the elements that destabilise it.

METHODS, SOURCES AND DATA COLLECTION: READING “HARMONIOUS WORLD” ACROSS SEVERAL CONTEXTS

I have argued for approaching “harmonious world” (and other set formulations) through an approach of excess. This means being more harmonious than harmony itself, going along with its logic and reading harmony everywhere and anywhere. Derrida’s point that we can displace a term and graft it into other chains of signification moreover reinforces the point that we must not confine our analysis only to China as a state actor or to foreign policy decision makers, but pay attention also to other contexts that have become entwined with its proliferation.
And indeed it has proliferated. "Harmonious world" has been used by state actors and actors more loosely tied to the establishment in a number of ways. In government use “harmony” has been attached to a plethora of things, from high profile events – “Thrilling Games, Harmonious Asia” was the motto of the 2010 Asian Games (Guangzhou Asian Games Organising Committee, 2009) – to everyday governmentality mediated by billboards and traffic cones.
Although the proliferation of harmony has been most marked, perhaps, in what may be thought of as the Chinese domestic sphere and in Chinese language, different actors have tried, with increasing insistence, to communicate and build it internationally. This proliferation of “harmony” can be elucidated by way of one example, an organisation called the World Harmony Foundation. “Harmonious world” rose on the radar of Western media in 2010 when, in a rejoinder to dissident Liu Xiaobo receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, the World Harmony Foundation gave a “World Harmony Award” to former Chinese defence minister, General Chi Haotian. The award, itself not sanctioned by the UN, was launched the same year “to mark the 65th anniversary of the United Nations”, the trophy itself designed as a crystal peace dove, “symbolizing the U.N.’s core spirit of ‘harmony and peace’” (CRI English, 2010). At a time when Liu was imprisoned for his pro-democracy work in China including authoring Charter 08, Sha Zukang, UN Undersecretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, travelled to China to present the award in honour of Chi’s unspecified contributions to world peace. In Chinese media this award and its ties to the UN were reported enveloped in a language of harmony (Xinhua, 2010a). However, it caused great controversy about the UN’s involvement in the prize as General Chi, in his role as chief of staff of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), ordered the assault on pro-democracy protesters in the 1989 Tiananmen massacre (The Wall Street Journal, 2010). The contrast between the treatments of Liu and Chi seem a clear indication as to the place of democracy in the official version of harmony.

The World Harmony Foundation that awarded Chi the prize is a private charity headed by Chinese businessman Frank Liu. Its feature mission is to make statesmen and other individuals ring its “Harmony Bell for Peace” as a symbol of their commitment to “harmony and peace”. The bell was designed to be included as part of

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55 Liu Xiaobo received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010 in absentia, having been imprisoned and sentenced to 11 years in prison in December 2009. His Charter 08 is a manifesto calling for reform of China’s human rights. Issued on 10 December 2008 to mark the 60th anniversary of the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it takes its cue from Charter 77, a Czech manifesto calling for reform in communist Czechoslovakia. 303 Chinese intellectuals and dissidents signed the charter. It has since been signed by several thousand people inside and outside China. The charter can be found online in English (Liu Xiaobo, 2008a) and in Chinese (Liu Xiaobo, 2008b).
the same 2005 UN 60th Anniversary Ceremony and Celebration at which Hu held his “harmonious world” speech. It was first officially rung by Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the UN, Jan Eliasson, President of the UN 60th General Assembly and Minhea Motoc, Romanian ambassador and President of the Security Council for October 2005, all “ringing in ‘A Time for Renewal’ the theme of the UN 60th Anniversary” (World Harmony Foundation, 2011). The bell has subsequently been brought to international statesmen, including to Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. in June 2006, and the foundation calls for nations to recycle weapons into more “Harmony Bells for Peace”. In February 2006, the World Harmony Foundation was awarded Accreditation and Consultative status to the UN Environment Programme’s Governing Council (World Harmony Foundation, 2011).

Apart from this attempt at association with the UN, the language of harmony has gained particular resonance in regional fora and organisations that have co-opted the term (or, we could also say, have been co-opted by it). For example, a few years after the Bo’ao Forum for Asia (BFA) had provided the stage for the launch and decline of the “peaceful rise” term, the heavily China-backed regional forum concluded its 2006 Annual Conference on a triumphal note: “[s]ince we established the permanent theme of ‘Asia searching for a win-win situation,’ basic values including harmonious development and win-win co-operation have been accepted by all participants of the forum” (Jiao Xiaoyang, 2006). As explained in the introduction to this thesis, the SCO provides an example of Beijing’s attempts to build a “harmonious world” and “harmony-with-difference” or, as it has been called in this context, the “Shanghai spirit” of “blending diversity under universalism” (Kerr, 2011: 171). This was also Hu Jintao’s stance at the regional organisation’s 2006 meeting (Xu Tao, 2007).

Through these examples we can see how efforts are made, and to a degree successfully so, to formally and informally spread the language of harmony through international high-profile fora, and to normalise its association with the UN and other institutions of global governance. Because of the resonance or intertextuality of the term we can benefit from also taking into account the reiterations and mediations of the term outside policymaking elites. My “strategy of excess”, as outlined above,
demands that I follow harmony where it goes and trace it across a number of different texts. I therefore follow what Michael Shapiro has called “disruptive writing”, which involves approaching an issue by a set of alternative texts and narratives to the well-rehearsed debates that they usually engage (Shapiro, 1997: ix, 38).

I trace the “harmonious world” concept across four different contexts: the policy documents and speeches that launched it as an official set phrase; the academic literatures that asked what harmonious world might mean and how it may be built; the exposition of a harmonious world idea at Expo 2010 Shanghai China; and the dissident play with the language of harmony in the online culture of egao. I focus on the explicit use of or reference to this specific phrase. However, “harmonious world” is not a concept in isolation, but part of a chain of signification, as described above. Most notably, it is closely linked to the “harmonious society” concept, to the point where one author discusses the two as the joint term “harmonious world plus”, or HWP (Blanchard, 2008: 165). Therefore, although the focus is on the explicit reference to “harmonious world”, I have included in my study some sources that refer to “harmony” in their discussions about the world or China’s IR, or that are ambiguous about the line between “harmonious world” and “harmonious society”. Indeed, I want to question the drawing of a line between the domestic and the international that rigid separation implies.

The choice of contexts in which I explore the concept of harmonious world is designed to reflect its significance to different segments of society, where it has been deployed for different purposes: policy, academic, public educational and dissident. Especially, I want to examine the deployment of harmony by state actors and promoters more or less closely tied to the state and its purported purposes – what I refer to as the “party-state”. I also want to examine the deployment of harmony by those who are thought of as dissident and as challenging the PRC state’s practice of harmony.

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56 I follow Johan Lagerkvist here, in referring to governmental, bureaucratic and CCP agencies at all levels of the political system as “the party-state”, unless directly referred to by their level-specific titles. Like Lagerkvist I take the party-state to indicate “the power complex consisting of different entities that in different ways design and make policy and laws, plan and monitor” China’s harmonious world and society (Lagerkvist, 2010: 11, fn. 3).
The policy discourse that I examine is important because it set off the wave of proliferating harmony that is under study here. The texts that I examine in the academic discourse are important as an example of how actors more or less closely tied to the state have used and developed the concept and theorised it in more explicitly spatio-temporal terms. The texts that I focus on are particularly significant because they come from scholars and publications that have been influential both with the Chinese leadership and their academic colleagues in China and in the international field. The Shanghai Expo is important because the Chinese leadership thought it was important. It is less well documented than the prior mega-event that was the 2008 Beijing Olympics, but because it is literally built as a Chinese image of world order, it provides an even richer case for the study of "harmonious world". It shows how the ideas emanating from policy and academic discourses are communicated to and negotiated in different media and to different audiences (leisure, business, educational, and so on). The form of dissident expression that I discuss is important because it is widespread in China, and has come to be understood as an important form of resistance by international scholars and Chinese dissident groups.

Having said this, the contexts in which I examine “harmonious world” provide only a snapshot of the doings of harmony. The instances I examine should not be taken as exhaustive of the possible doings of harmony. Most notably, perhaps, I take “harmonious world” as my point of departure, and examine the development of the concept in the wake of Hu Jintao’s official use of the term in Chinese policy discourse. Of course, the concept has a history prior to 2005, and there are numerous traditions of speaking and writing about harmony in various languages and cultures. However, a cursory survey, however, shows that “harmony” has been used in various contexts to the simultaneously homogenising and discriminatory effects that are of concern in this thesis: to legitimize homogenising tendencies in the interest of nationalism and central power holders in contemporary Indonesia (Acciaioli, 2001: 104, 107-8); to legitimate the naturalisation of inequality for anti-liberal and xenophobic purposes in 19th century Argentina (Rock, 1987: 285-7, 290); as a myth obscuring racial grievances in Colombia since the 18th century (Lasso, 2007: 9-12, 34 ff., 57 ff.); as part of “idyllizing and harmony-seeking nationalism” in inter-war Scandinavia (Nielsen, 1997: 68). Thus, as one may expect, there is some indication that “harmony” is neither uniquely Chinese, nor naturally conducive to “better” systems and institutions.
these iterations cannot be included in the scope of this thesis, and will be left for future research.

Finally, a note should be made on my navigation of different languages. Where possible, I use official English language versions of documents. Sometimes, there are interesting discrepancies between English and Chinese versions, which I point out where relevant. I use simplified Chinese characters and "pin-yin" romanisation; I indicate the Chinese translation in pin-yin and characters where I think it is needed for clarification, and in a few cases indicate tonal markers to clarify my argument, as in the explanation of “harmony” (hèxié 和谐) and “rivercrab” (hèxiè 河蟹). Where I make claims about set formulations in China’s diplomatic relations, I have checked the English and Chinese language use against some other languages (French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and German). Unless referenced to a non-Chinese language source, translations are my own.

“Harmonious world” in party-state policy

Since my point of departure in this study is Hu Jintao’s policy formulation, it was necessary in the introduction to this thesis to carefully outline the deployment of “harmonious world” in the party-state’s own speeches and policy documents. Because I am interested in how the party-state itself wants to portray its view of “harmonious world” to wider global and domestic audiences, my data consists in official publications, speeches and policy documents. I have processed all Chinese government white papers published from 1991 to 2011 (77 in total) in Chinese and English languages, as well as the annually published Reports on the Work of Government for 2000-2012. Other government sources were searched for permutations of the term “harmonious world”, but excluded because of the relatively infrequent occurrence of the term, including: the statistical communiqés of the National Bureau of Statistics of China, the State Council Gazettes, the database of laws and regulations of the National People’s Congress (NPC), and the database of the Legislative Affairs Office of the State Council. I sourced a significant portion of materials through searching the website of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs for speeches and documents made available by the ministry, that include permutations of
the term “harmonious world” in English and Chinese. I also processed all documents referring to the term that were made available on the websites of individual Chinese embassies, in English, Chinese, French, Spanish, Portuguese or German (166 embassies in total).\textsuperscript{58} I have moreover sought out additional speeches made by key figures such as President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and Vice-President Xi Jinping, especially at key state visits, or significant gatherings in national bodies like the NPC or the CPPCC, as well as international bodies like the UN. Finally, I have processed written and video materials from Chinese and international news media.

In my examination of the policy discourse, I have focused on three key documents that have developed the idea of harmonious world. I began with the speech that launched the concept to the UN at its 60\textsuperscript{th} anniversary summit in 2005 (Hu Jintao, 2005).

Although the concept had been mentioned in more peripheral contexts prior to 2005, this was the definite launch of this concept as an important set phrase. I moreover paid close attention to one document that was especially significant in elaborating the term’s meaning early on: a white paper published in December the same year titled \textit{China’s peaceful development road} (State Council of the People’s Republic of China, 2005). This document has been the most explicit in elucidating what the party-state takes the concept to mean, and framed subsequent articulations in documents such as Hu’s 2007 report at the 17\textsuperscript{th} Party Congress (Hu Jintao, 2007). I finally focused on a second white paper called \textit{China’s Peaceful Development} (State Council of the PRC, 2011c), published in 2011. This document reiterates much of the argument of the earlier texts. It is important because it shows an explicit, official and more recent articulation of “harmonious world”, and because other documents and particularly

\textsuperscript{58} In my analysis, I rely primarily on English language documents, and have used the sources in other languages to “check” for significant deviations that may contradict my claims. These sources are limited to ones where my own language skills are enough to provide an understanding of the text. Having said this, these languages cover all of the Americas, Africa and Oceania, as well as a majority of Europe, and those not covered have documents available in Chinese language. In addition, many embassies do not provide documents in the official language(s) of the state to which they are deployed (for example, embassies to Scandinavian, Arabic and many Asian countries provide documents in English or French, as well as Chinese).
ambassadors’ speeches rely heavily on this document and promote it as “China’s view”.

“Harmonious world” in Chinese academic discourse

In chapter 3 I explore Chinese academic writing produced after 2005 that deploys and/or discusses the “harmonious world” concept. I examine a significant volume of academic texts, most of which are in Chinese language and were available via the Chinese language academic database China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI). I have read all the documents that mention “harmonious world” that are authored since 2005 by any of the 25 scholars identified as the most prominent Chinese IR scholars in a recent study, and that are available via this comprehensive database. I have also read all the documents that mention “harmonious world” that are published since 2005 in any of the most influential Chinese journals in this debate, and that are available via CNKI. I have also read additional books, articles and conference papers that appear particularly relevant because of a strong focus on the elaboration of “harmonious world” (for example Ma Zhengang, 2007; Ba Xiang, 2010).

Some of these texts make only brief mention of “harmonious world”, others discuss it in more detail. Two authors, Yan Xuetong and Zhao Tingyang, receive more detailed treatment because they have been influential in the wider international debates on Chinese IR. Professor Yan Xuetong is director of the Institute of International Studies at Beijing’s prestigious Tsinghua University. He is influential with both the Chinese policy elite and media-figures involved in shaping public opinion, and was named one of the world’s 100 most influential public intellectuals by US journal Foreign Policy in 2008 (Foreign Policy, 2008). Zhao Tingyang, Professor of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), is like Yan Xuetong a prominent scholar and a public intellectual. His work has been published in English and Chinese language and has

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59 The list in question is based on scholars’ reputation among their peers, assessed through a survey distributed to 305 scholars at China’s top universities (Kristensen and Nielsen, 2011: 5).

60 I identify the most influential journals by tracing the debates on harmonious world. The 14 journals that I have exhaustively studied include: Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi, Guoji zhengzhi kexue, Liaowang, Xuezhi luntan, Dushu, Guoji jingji pinglun, Guoji zhengzhi yanjiu, Zhongguo fazhan guancha, Meiguo yanjiu, Jiaoxue yu yanjiu, Zhongguo yu shijie guancha, Zhanlue yu guanli, Xiandai guoji guanxi and Guoji zhonglie.
received significant critical attention in China and internationally (see for example Barabantseva, 2009; Callahan, 2004; 2008; 2012b). Although Zhao’s work is much debated in the discipline of IR, as a professor of philosophy he represents in many ways an alternative view to Yan, who makes a more direct intervention in traditional IR theory.

Yan’s and Zhao’s texts appear in both English and Chinese languages, they both appear on the list of China’s fifteen most prominent IR scholars, the concepts they develop are frequently deployed also in other Chinese literatures and they are frequently cited in other texts on harmonious world. Therefore, they illustrate well the tendencies that I wish to illuminate in the wider debate. The literatures I examine are not exhaustive of things written on or referring to harmonious world, but they are nonetheless numerous and influential enough to illustrate some general tendencies in academic imaginaries of China and the world.

“Harmonious world” at Expo 2010 Shanghai China

Expo 2010 Shanghai China provides to the study an example, in chapter 4, of the way China’s place in the world is imagined outside textual documents in the narrow sense. The Expo took place from 1 May to 31 October 2010, and as usual when this type of thing is done in China it was the largest, most expensive, and most visited of its kind (Barboza, 2010; Xinhua, 2010d; 2010e). It is often understood as a tool of China’s much discussed “soft power” (Blanchard and Lu Fujia, forthcoming 2012). The Expo theme “Better city, better life” was chosen to reflect a concern with future policy making, urban strategies and sustainable development. The Expo was a venue that brought together various actors to negotiate ideas of China in the world, including the governmental organisers, various local governments, foreign countries, enterprises and organisations that participated with pavilions, and of course the 73 million visitors that organisers say attended the Expo during the 6 months in which it was open (Expo Shanghai Online, 2010b).

I pay particular attention to the official attempts at prescribing China’s future relation to the world that went on at the Expo, which is why a majority of the data comes from
the Expo organisers themselves in the form of books, pamphlets, news, the official Expo website and other media sources, as well as the images, structures, memorabilia, buildings and displays exhibited at the Expo. Although this data does not necessarily provide a coherent account of world-making, it nonetheless expresses a specific strategy linked to the party-state.

To collect data I deployed a number of methods in the various “sites” that constituted the Expo. A first form of data collection was the assembling of commentary on the Expo in Chinese official news media (for example Xinhua, 2010a; 2010b), but also in blogs (for example Minter, 2010; Stranded Mariner, 2007) and in secondary literature on the Expo (for example Hu Bin, 2010; Shanghai shibohui shiwu xietiaoju, 2009; Yang Jiemian, 2011). This data was collected throughout the six months of the Expo, as well as prior to and after the Expo took place.

Another crucial method by which I collected data was participant observation. I visited the physical Expo site on 8-10 June 2010, an amount of time that corresponds to that which many other visitors spent there. During this time I visited numerous pavilions, queued and observed at the Expo site. I collected pamphlets, memorabilia and took a large number of photographs of buildings, exhibitions and signs. There was also a virtual replica of the Expo, a detailed online landscape simulating the Expo site and Expo experience (Expo Shanghai Online, 2010). After my visit to the physical Expo I spent several months at its virtual counterpart in the autumn of 2010, visiting pavilions and exhibitions, playing Expo games, reading other visitors’ messages on its notice boards and interacting with visitors in this virtual environment.

I also conducted semi-structured interviews with participants during my visit to the physical and virtual Expo. To collect data, in particular interview data, I employed a method inspired by the “walking interviews” outlined by Andrew Clark and Nick Emmel (2010), the “walking fieldwork” of Andrew Irving (2005; 2011), Margarethe Kusenbach’s ethnographic “go-along” (2003) and David Macauley’s writing on walking and ambulation (2000). My search for a space of multiple trajectories sits well with Macauley’s claims that walking is a political practice which “shows us the many particular and overlapping ‘walks of life’” (Macauley, 2000: 4) and that “[w]ith
walking, the practice is itself the path, which always takes place in a place” (Macauley, 2000: 8). Moreover, as he argues:

Through walking, one constitutes both a ‘here’ and a ‘there,’ a ‘near’ and a ‘far,’ as one does in verbal communication. This dimension underscores the close parallel between pedestrian and linguistic enunciation, introduces an otherness or outside in relation to the ambling self, and articulates the conjunctive and disjunctive dimensions to the places through which we walk (Macauley, 2000: 26).

Through Macauley I drew loosely on the notion of the dérive, developed by Guy Debord and the Situationist International. The term literally means “drifting” and is used to denote a method of "transient passage through varied ambiances" (Debord, 1981: 50). As Macauley explains:

The dérive or drift combines both planning and chance into a kind of ‘organized spontaneity’ as one navigates through the city. It negotiates a tension between a blind and random ‘letting go’ and its opposite, an active awareness of psychological and placial possibilities (Macauley, 2000: 30).

The method I used was an adaptation of such “walking interviews” methods. It was a useful tool in letting me approach the Expo environment with clear aims and strategy, whilst remaining sensitive to the way the layout of Expo space would steer me onto specific paths. Moreover, interacting with the simulated world that is the Expo site(s) provided a productive point of reference for interviews, which often made reference to exhibits and structures in the immediate environment. Furthermore, ambulation became a very practical way of managing the restraints of making ad-hoc interviews with Chinese people who may be initially suspicious of a foreigner asking political questions. Queuing interviews provided the structuring points of reference, the casual access to interviewees as well as the time to talk and take notes that I needed.

I interviewed people along my path with whom I was thrown together in/by physical and/or virtual time and space. Since I take this “thrown-togetherness” to be one of the key possibilities and challenges that space presents us with, I chose to work with, rather than against, such randomness of encounter. The nature of such encounters naturally meant that participants could choose to steer away from uncomfortable or politically sensitive topics and that interviews were of limited “depth”. The possibility
of self-censorship may have been reinforced by my position as an “outsider” in the shape of a young, white woman, as well as by the fact that interview situations were not private. The comments on and conversations about the world-making going on at the Expo merely, but significantly, displayed some views on the topics discussed, views that seemed acceptable to the participants to express under the conditions of the interview situation and environment. In this way their views provide an interesting angle on how the exhibitions and narratives of the Expo are re-interpreted and mediated through the encounter between people. In the chapter that examines Expo 2010 I rarely quote directly from the interview material collected – the random and informal nature of my encounters also made it difficult to make authoritative claims about reception based on the resulting data. Nonetheless, these conversations have informed my reading of Expo 2010, albeit in a less formal fashion.

“Harmonious world” in egao dissidence

The final context in which I trace the concept of harmonious world, in chapter 5, is in online dissidence, particularly in the form of egao. Egao is a recently emerged form of political satire that has grown popular on the Chinese Internet (Meng Bingchun, 2011). In particular, I trace the emergence of the “rivercrab” as a symbol of resistance to the “harmonising” government policies online. The rivercrab is a particular Chinese form of pun on “harmony”, to which it sounds very similar when pronounced, although the characters are entirely different. It is used by online dissidence to simultaneously avoid and criticise China’s Internet censorship, colloquially known as “being harmonised”.

In my discussion of this playful and critical reference to “harmonious world” I draw on a quantity of blog posts (Goldkorn, 2010), images (Alison, 2010; Heifenbrug, 2008b; 2008a; Xuanlv, 2010), music videos (Hrehrn, 2009), songs (DZS manyin, 2010), design items (Keso, 2008), arts exhibitions (Hung, 2011) and photography (Thorniley, 2010) referring to this “rivercrab” that have appeared online since 2005. I build on this multimedia to outline the different ways in which netizens have played with the terminology of “harmonious world”, changing héxié shijie (和谐世界 – harmonious world) to héxiè shijie (河蟹世界 – rivercrab world).
CONCLUSION

In official party-state text, harmony is, in the words of Du Yuxin, secretary of the Harbin Municipal Party Committee, “a sort of way of coordinating diversities, and pursues an ideal social state in which pluralistic elements symbioses, coexist and integrate with each other” [sic] (Du Yuxing, 2006, cited in Qin Zhiyong, 2008: 63). The point of harmony is to resolve contradictions. In the introduction to this thesis I have indicated that this resolution of contradictions, or “integration” of differences, is aligned with a number of temporal, spatial and other concepts that may impact our ability to think harmonious world in terms of coeval multiplicities. Subsequent chapters on the negotiation of “harmonious world” in different contexts will follow up on the implications of these themes for thinking coeval multiplicities. In its efforts at resolving contradictions, and in proliferating the language of “harmonious world” en masse, the current party-state leadership are following a tradition of attempts at societal control by way of prescribing set phrases:

[i]Immediately after 1949 formalization involved erasing all traces of what the People’s Daily called the ‘illogical and ungrammatical language’ that had been the hallmark of past non-communist political discourse and supplanting it with a ‘pure and healthy language’ suited to ‘the propagation of the truth to the masses’ (People’s Daily, 1951, cited in Schoenhals, 1992: 14).

I take seriously the CCP concern with correct and incorrect language and their use of official formulations. I will follow on Schoenhals’s project in examining a particular set phrase, namely “harmonious world”, but within this analysis I make room for the failings of that “power” and examine the grammatically problematic and “sick” language, that which messes with the official “truth”.61 I will do so through tracing “harmonious world” in academic literatures, in attempts at popularization through Expo 2010, and in the online dissidence of egao culture. Through examining the term in these different contexts, I will explore how the system itself, in its excessive

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61 When Schoenhals himself briefly gestures at such failings, it is largely in terms of Chinese actors’ indirect criticism of some thing or somebody in power via a different object, which he sees as very limited (Schoenhals, 1992: 124), or in terms of the failing of the preferred term of one leader or faction in favour of the preferred term of another leader or faction (Schoenhals, 1992: 115-16, 118). He makes no space for the possible inherent failings of tifa as such.
proliferation of harmony, produces that which threatens it, how the attempts at “purification” and “health” is what makes the “impurities” and “illness” possible, and vice versa. By doing so, I deviate from the lines of inquiry that have approached “harmonious world” as though it had a fixed meaning that scholars can uncover. I ask instead how “harmonious world” can both do and undo the way we think about China in the world, and how “harmonious world” is itself undone in the effort to promote it.

Whether the effect of excessive proliferation that I describe here is relatively new, or whether it occurred in the earlier PRC history that is the focus of Schoenhals’ study is a question to which I do not have the answer and that does not fall within the scope of this thesis. What I want to show, however, is that there is something else going on in the CCP’s proliferation of set phrases beyond what Schoenhals saw in his exploration of the issue.

I have in this chapter begun to outline a strategy or approach to studying set phrases like “harmonious world”, inspired by the thought of Jean Baudrillard and Jacques Derrida. With regards to this strategy or approach, a caveat is in order. Derrida has stressed that any formalisation, whether as method, theory, or practice, would reduce deconstruction to a program, a technical operation that could be simply “applied” to a given case or text. Derrida emphasises that there is never a single deconstruction that can be defined thus, outside of all context: “[d]econstruction does not exist somewhere, pure, proper, self-identical, outside of its inscriptions in conflictual and differentiated contexts; it ‘is’ only what it does and what is done with it, there where it takes place” (Derrida, 1988: 141).

Derrida’s understanding of text, moreover, indicates a limit of my choice of the contexts in which I study “harmonious world” and the methods and materials that I use to do so. The texts or contexts I study are constituted and reconstituted by every different reading and by the wider societal discourses that involve the necessary temporal and spatial underpinnings on which the term rests. Therefore, my classification of texts on “harmonious world” is itself artificial and political, and ultimately unjustifiable.
Finally, it should be acknowledged that my writing here is not structured purely chronologically, nor simply thematically. I have in my writing tried to maintain awareness of how my structuring of the text plays with and draws on the notions of time that the text itself also discusses. I critique the taxonomy and chronology that structures accounts of “harmonious world”, and at the same time I (re)taxonomise and (re)chronologise it through my own analysis. The irony of this move is not lost on me, but is part of the struggling with these concepts and the attempt to write the world more critically – to perform a successful failure.
2 The theoretical challenge: Thinking time, space and coeval multiplicities

The introduction and previous chapter outlined the basic tenets of my approach to “harmonious world”, and suggested that the notion has been articulated in official party-state discourse in terms associated with time and space. In this chapter I now turn to these two concepts in order to outline the theoretical context into which this thesis intervenes.

To this end I comment briefly, in the first part, on time and space and on the sense in which they are of interest in this thesis. I pick up on the problem pointed out by some literatures concerned with time and/or space, in IR and in other disciplines, with a tendency to think spatial difference as aligned in temporal sequence. Here, I introduce the topic through mapping it out in the work of Johannes Fabian, Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney, Kimberley Hutchings and Doreen Massey. These thinkers all, in different ways, call for a more thorough thinking of time and space together in a way that makes possible “coeval multiplicities”. This call is the theoretical challenge to which this thesis responds.

The rest of the chapter outlines how this challenge may be met. I suggest that the work of Jacques Derrida and Jean Baudrillard may be more useful to such a project than the writers who have mapped out the problem have suggested. The second part of this chapter, then, introduces the work of Jacques Derrida. It does so by outlining the way his work has been approached first by Massey, then by Hutchings. In each case I point to the aspects in Derrida that they find promising, describe what they find lacking in Derrida for the project of thinking “coeval multiplicities”, and reply to such criticism. Finding that their dismissal of Derrida for such a project may be premature, I argue that Derrida retains great potential for thinking this time-space relation differently. The third part of this chapter elaborates on how the work of Baudrillard and Derrida complement each other in a way that can help us to begin thinking time and space differently.
THE CHALLENGE OF COEVAL MULTIPLICITIES: THINKING TIME AND SPACE TOGETHER

Before I begin my excavation of some key texts on time and space, I should clarify what I am not going to discuss here. I am not concerned with outlining all the different ways in which we have theorized time, space and time/space. I am not looking for a definition of time or space, but am interested in how they have been produced in relation to each other and in the implications this has for the way we think about self and other, sameness and difference. I will not argue here that space has been prioritised over time (like Walker, 1993), or that time has been prioritised over space (like Massey, 2005: 21; Soja, 1989). These critiques generally make the same point about inside/outside dichotomisation (Strandsbjerg, 2010: 40), and I simply take from such debates the point that we need to think time and space together, without privileging one over the other.

What I will do is outline one particular problem that has been examined in various disciplines – that of the temporal alignment of spatial difference, or “allochrony”. Various scholars have discussed this problematique, and in this section I introduce how some key influential works have examined it. These works have all argued that we are failing, across disciplines, to think about time and space together in a way that allows for coeval multiplicities (Fabian, 1983: 34; Massey, 2005: 8).

One key text that began elaborating the problematic lack of “coevalness” took the form of an intervention in anthropological scholarship. Johannes Fabian’s Time and the Other (1983) argues that the discipline worked in a way that created its object through conceiving of it in a time different to that of scholars themselves. He contends that anthropology has continued, in different guises, the “evolutionary Time” that emerged in Darwin’s footsteps. Fabian argues that evolutionary temporalisation rests on the assumptions that:

relationships between parts of the world (in the widest sense of both natural and sociocultural entities) can be understood as temporal relations. Dispersal in space reflects directly, which is not to say simply or in obvious ways, sequence in Time (Fabian, 1983: 11-12).
This way of thinking placed all living societies on a temporal slope or stream of time "some upstream, some downstream" (Fabian, 1983: 18). In this way, discourses that make use of terms like "primitive", or other euphemisms like traditional or Third World, observe and study in terms of the primitive, rather than observe and study the primitive, making it a category rather than an object of thought (Fabian, 1983: 18).

Fabian traces how this manner of thinking the relation between time and space emerged, from Darwin until today. Importantly for my efforts here to think time and space together, he argues that ever since time was neutralised, secularised and spatiolised with Darwin, the efforts of anthropologists to use temporal devices to construct a relation with its Other, its object, affirmed difference as distance (Fabian, 1983: 16).

From Fabian I (and others, like Massey) take the word “coeval” and “coevalness” to express:

a need to steer between such closely related notions as synchronous/simultaneous and contemporary. I take synchronous to refer to events occurring at the same physical time; contemporary asserts co-occurrence in ... typological time. Coeval, according to my pocket dictionary, covers both (‘of same age, duration, or epoch’). Beyond that, it is to connote a common, active ‘occupation,’ or sharing, of time. But that is only a starting point (Fabian, 1983: 31).

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62 Fabian traces this thinking through evolutionist anthropologists (who "spatialised Time" as a taxonomic tree (1983: 15)), on to functionalism, culturalism and structuralism (that did not solve the problem of universal human Time, but "ignored it at best, and denied its significance at worst" (1983: 21)), further to models of communicatory or Durkheimian sacred Time (that "project, between sender and receiver, a temporal distance" (1983: 31)). To Fabian, relativists like Ernst Bloch avoid coevalness through "walling-in the Time of others so that it cannot spill over into ours", which contrasts with the strategy of cultural taxonomy, exemplified by the structuralism of Levi-Strauss, which "preempts the question of coevalness. Its strategy is to eliminate Time as a significant dimension of either cultural integration or ethnography" (1983: 52).

63 When I look "coeval" up in a Chinese dictionary (Yellow Bridge, 2010) I get the translation 同代的人, which literally translates as "people of the same era". "Synchronous" gives 同步, or "same step"; "simultaneous" gives 同日, or "same day/date"; "simultaneously" gives 同时, or "same time"; "contemporary" gives 同代者, or "same era person", 同时代, or "same era", 同时期, or "same phase", or interestingly also translates as 近人, which literally translates as "near person" or "close person" and can also mean "modern person", "close friend", "associate", or "intimate". It is worth noting that these terms refer to time in different ways, but that all except the last one contain the character tong 同, which indicates sameness, and appears in traditional Chinese cosmologies such as the ideal state of “Great Harmony” or “Great Unity” (Datong 大同) (for a discussion of the idea of unity in Datong, see Callahan, 2004; 2011: 172). The role of tong in discourses on harmonious world is further discussed in chapter 3.
Fabian argues that as it appears possible to refuse coevalness to another person or another people, coevalness is not a transcultural fact or transcendental condition of knowledge, and the term was chosen in order to signal the embeddedness of all temporal relations, and thus all contemporaneity, in culturally organised practice (1983: 34).

The absence of coevalness is what Fabian terms “allochrony”, and he sees an *aporia* in that anthropology relies on communication and thus coevalness in fieldwork, but that most writing and theorising is then allochonic (1983: 32). Devastatingly, as a consequence of this type of allochonic theorising:

> [t]he Other’s empirical presence turns into his theoretical absence ... An account of the ways in which this has been done needs to be given even if it is impossible to propose, in the end, more than hints and fragments of an alternative. The radical contemporaneity of mankind is a project. Theoretical reflection can identify obstacles; only changes in the praxis and politics of ... research and writing can contribute solutions to the problems that will be raised (Fabian, 1983: xi).

Fabian’s “theoretical reflection” had impacts also in other fields, including in IR. Inayatullah and Blaney’s *International Relations and the Problem of Difference* (2004) calls for the discipline of IR to recognise and deal with difference differently. They argue that the relationship between self and other in IR is ethically problematic because difference is obliterated, contained or assimilated (2004: 2-3) and the other is represented as inferior and uncivilised, needing reclamation or removal. Modernisation theory, they argue, worked to obliterate difference through dichotomising inside/outside and tradition/modernity and not taking other understandings into account (2004: 95). They recommend that instead we should illustrate “recessive themes” present in “dominant discourses” and move towards an “ethnological” IR that uses the other to reflect also on the self, understanding the other as both internal and external (2004: 9, 13-14, 158, 166-68). Their suggestion is that we can find such ways if we look, as I do in this thesis, “beyond the European imperium” and in recessive strands of western socio-political thought (2004: ix).
Kimberly Hutchings makes a similar argument with regards to IR in *Time and World Politics* (2008), where she examines the philosophical positions underpinning rival accounts of world political time. She shows, through the terms *kairos* and *chronos*, how in turn Kant, Hegel, Marx; Arendt and Benjamin; Popper, Fukuyama and Huntington; Habermas, Hardt and Negri; Virilio and Agamben “all render world politics a unitary object for analysis and judgement by privileging a Eurocentric interpretation of the western trajectory of world-political time” (Hutchings, 2008: 23). Hutchings echoes the call for coeval multiplicities when she argues:

> [t]he challenge of thinking the present of world politics is the challenge of thinking heterotemporality, ultimately neither one present nor many presents, but a mutual contamination of ‘nows’ that participate in a variety of temporal trajectories, and which do not derive their significance from the one meta-narrative about how they all fit together (Hutchings, 2008: 166).

Like Inayatullah and Blaney, she points to the potential of poststructuralist and postcolonial thought to respond to this challenge (2008: 24, 167).

Blaney and Inayatullah continue this line of critique when they argue, in their subsequent volume *Savage Economics* (2010) which draws on both Fabian and Hutchings, that economics performs the same move of dealing with “simultaneous occupation” through eradication or separation, or through temporal displacement (2010: 200). They trace this temporal displacement from the ethnologies of Lafitau, through Scottish enlightenment thinkers Smith, Steuart and Ferguson to Hegel and Marx.

Where Fabian (and also Inayatullah and Blaney and Hutchings) focused the analysis on the concept of time (without necessarily ignoring or deprioritising space), Doreen Massey follows on his argument to provide a powerful geographical manifesto in *For Space* (2005). She draws on Fabian to argue that “space” has been imbued in “debilitating” chains of meaning that embed “space” with closure, stasis, science, writing and representation (Massey, 2005: 19). We should, she argues, reembed it in other chains, alongside openness, heterogeneity and liveliness, which requires that we think the two terms “time” and “space” as co-constitutive (2005: 19). For time to be open, space too must not be closed. One of her key themes is that:
time and space must be thought together: that this is not some mere rhetorical flourish, but that it influences how we think of both terms; that thinking of time and space together does not mean they are identical (for instance in some undifferentiated four-dimensionality), rather it means that the imagination of one will have repercussions (not always followed through) for the imagination of the other and that space and time are implicated in each other; that it opens up some problems which have heretofore seemed (logically, intractably) insoluble; and that it has reverberations for thinking about politics and the spatial (Massey, 2005: 18).

I think the key point of Massey’s intervention is the same as Fabian’s, closely related to Inayatullah and Blaney’s as well as Hutchings’ projects: they all attempt, in somewhat different terms but against a shared background, to intervene in their respective discipline in order to point out its inability to imagine and theorise time and space in a way that allows for a “simultaneity of stories-so-far”, “heterotemporality”, “simultaneous occupation” or “coeval multiplicities”. Because the latter term runs through these analyses from Fabian to Massey this is the term I will use from now on, but I think the terms are essentially getting at the same problem. All of these scholars call for us to pay more attention to this problematic, and to start stepping up to the challenge it presents us with. This thesis is a response to their critique and their challenge, albeit with qualifications to which I will return further below.

BEGINNING TO STEP UP TO THE CHALLENGE: DERRIDA

All the scholars discussed above point towards possible ways of thinking that may meet the challenge they pose. However, most of them restrict such suggestion to brief and rather tentative gestures. One thinker that enters the analysis of both Hutchings and Massey is Jacques Derrida. Both of them are initially excited by a perceived promise in Derrida’s work for rethinking time/space. Massey appreciates that Derridean space/spacing (espacement), unlike Laclau or de Certeau, does not use the terminology of space as a “simple residual-category negativity of the temporal”, but

64 The conception of “simultaneity” is criticized by Derrida as coordinating two absolute presents and thus implying a linearization (Derrida, 1976 [1967]: 85). I do not think such an assumption is necessarily implied in Massey’s “Simultaneity of stories-so-far” or in Inayatullah and Blaney’s “simultaneous occupation”.

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gives it explicit attention in its own right (Massey, 2005: 49). Hutchings similarly points to Derrida as a potential source of inspiration for thinking world political time differently, in a more anti-historicist manner, in response to the problems outlined earlier in this chapter (Hutchings, 2008: 21, 24). In this section I explore this potential in Derrida.

However, both Massey and Hutchings subsequently turn away from Derrida as inspirational for such a project, finding his work only partly useful and pointing out some aspects of Derrida that they think restrict the possibility of thinking time/space in a manner more conducive to the aims described above. Derrida is criticised because allegedly 1) he constructs difference negatively from “the One” (Massey) and 2) he can only think multiplicity through spectrality and thus fails to fully conceptualise multiplicity in the present (Hutchings). In this section I engage with Massey’s and Hutchings’ critiques. The purpose of doing so is not only to elucidate further my understanding of Derrida’s work, and the way I draw upon it here, but also to bring up some issues that will be important for thinking about the allochrony problematique and the possibility of coeval multiplicities.

**Massey on Derrida**

A key concern to Massey is that difference be conceived of as “not negative difference but positive heterogeneity”, because the former:

> may help us to expose some of its [space’s] presumed coherences but it does not properly bring it to life. It is that liveliness, the complexity and openness of the configuration itself, the positive multiplicity, which is important for an appreciation of the spatial (Massey, 2005: 19).

Massey examines the conceptualisations of space by a number of social thinkers, including Lévi-Strauss, Sartre, Braudel and Ricoeur, de Certeau, Laclau and Mouffe, and Althusser’s critique of Hegel (Massey, 2005: 17-59). In all cases, she finds the tendency to shut down the possibility for coeval multiplicities.

Below I examine Massey’s critique of Derridean deconstruction. Massey argues that deconstruction through Derrida’s “spacing” results in a negatively defined difference
that starts from “the One” and “reduces the potential for an appreciation for a positive multiplicity” (2005: 51). Agreeing with Massey’s broader aims, I argue that we can read Derrida differently to help us imagine coeval multiplicities. I go about this argument through first introducing Derrida’s deconstruction and the aspects of his work that Massey appreciates, second outlining the key points of her critique, and third explaining how this critique can be countered. I argue that Massey in fact produces the problem she claims to uncover.

**Massey’s reading of Derrida: The good bits**

As explained in the previous chapter, the broad spirit of Derrida’s work derives from his “general strategy of deconstruction” (Derrida, 1987 [1972]: 41), which relies on a “double movement” of simultaneous reversal and displacement of terms that are produced in apparent binary opposition in a given text. In such binaries, again, “one of the terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand”, which leads to the reading of deconstruction through the double gesture of reversal and displacement (Derrida, 1987 [1972]: 41).

As Massey recognises, Derrida’s concept of différance “holds within it an imagination of both the temporal and the spatial (deferral and differentiation) ... changing an ‘e’ to an ‘a’ adds time to space” (Massey, 2005: 49, emphasis in original). He is also explicit about aspects of space that Massey finds crucial: “space as interval, and as holding open the possibility of an open future” (Massey, 2005: 49). Massey quotes Derrida to the effect that “[d]issemination ... marks an irreducible and generative multiplicity” (Derrida, 1987 [1972]: 45, cited in Massey, 2005: 49, emphasis in both originals).

Similarly (in Positions):

spacing is a concept which also, but not exclusively, carries the meaning of a productive, positive, generative force. Like dissemination, like différance it carries along with it a genetic motif: it is not only the interval, the space constituted between two things (which is the usual sense of spacing), but also spacing, the operation.... This movement is inseparable from temporalization ... and from différance (Derrida, 1987 [1972]: 106-7, footnote 42, cited in Massey, 2005: 51, emphasis in both originals).
Massey is thus particularly interested in the crucial role of spacing to
difference/différance, which she understands as opening up “the usual meaning of
‘history’” (Massey, 2005: 49), which associates the term with the temporal alignment
of presence and has “an entire system of implications” including teleology, continuity
and the assumption of an interiorised accumulation of meaning (Derrida, 1987
[1972]: 57, cited in Massey, 2005: 49, emphasis in both originals). To Massey, Derrida
writes, in all of the above, in the spirit of the coeval multiplicities towards which she is
working.

Massey’s reading of Derrida: The critique

What then is Massey’s issue with Derrida and deconstruction? Massey’s key problem
with spacing is that on her reading it constructs difference negatively from “the One”.
She bases this claim on her reading of the series of interviews with Derrida that are
collected in Positions (1987 [1972]). She is particularly concerned with the phrases
that fill in the first ellipsis and continuation of the footnote quoted from it at some
length above, where “the operation” is written of as “the movement of setting aside”
that “marks what is set aside from itself, what interrupts every self-identity, every
punctual assemblage of the self, every self-homogeneity, self-interiority” (Derrida,
Based on this footnote Massey identifies what she thinks of as forms of negativity that
are problematic for an analysis of social, physical space. On her reading, the
conceptualisation of spacing in terms of “setting-aside” equates to an “expulsion”, with
the aim of constructing a homogenous self-identity. She reads in deconstruction a
focus on fragmentation and rupture and the co-constitution of identity/difference
(Massey, 2005: 51). This form of theorisation, to Massey, produces a self/other
relation that is always the same, a relation of negativity or “distinguishing from”
(2005: 51). Accordingly, it imagines “heterogeneity in relation to internal disruption
and coherence rather than as a positive multiplicity” (Massey, 2005: 51).

To Massey, this is politically disabling because “in some of this tradition the
acknowledgement of multiplicity and difference has led too much to a focus on
internal fragmentation and the contemplation of internal decentring” instead of an
engagement with external relatedness (2005: 51-2). The reason for this, Massey claims, is that it is “unavoidable” for this way of thinking to bring with it the positing of a structure that on the one hand strives to be coherent in its particular sense and on the other hand is inevitably undermined by, or internally dependent on, something imagined as “Other” (Massey, 2005: 52). This is the constitutive outside and simultaneously the internal disruption. To Massey, this theorisation postulates big “I” Identities as coherent in order first to differentiate them in opposition to each other, then to argue that they are internally disrupted anyway. What gets lost in this process, on Massey’s reading, is coeval coexistence (2005: 52).

Massey further picks up on a theme that runs through the discussion between Derrida and Jean-Louis Houdebine in Positions, where the latter insists that “alterity” and “spacing”, albeit indissociable, “present us with two moments not identical to each other” (Houdebine in Derrida, 1987 [1972]: 81, 91, cited in Massey, 2005: 52). Massey finds the root of the problem in Derrida’s claim that spacing:

is the index of an irreducible exterior, and at the same time of a movement, a displacement that indicates an irreducible alterity. I do not see how one could dissociate the two concepts of spacing and alterity (Derrida, 1987 [1972]: 81, cited in Massey, 2005: 51, emphasis in both originals).

On Massey’s reading, this quote shows how Derrida imagines difference and multiplicity as associated through a process of displacement and exteriorisation, which she in turn associates to abjection and repression. On this understanding, others, and the specification of their “difference”, are only recognised through the process of being set aside. This means that there is one single process that produces all others and all difference. On this view Derrida’s thinking, despite the best intentions, starts from “the One” and can construct plurality and difference only negatively (Massey, 2005: 52-3).

Massey contrasts Derrida’s claim that “spacing designates nothing, ... but is the index of an irreducible exterior” to Houdebine’s insistence that the motif of heterogeneity:

is also the position of this alterity as such, that is, the position of a ‘something’ (a ‘nothing’) that is not nothing…. The complete development of heterogeneity thus obliges us to go to the positivity of this ‘nothing’ designated by spacing

Massey also acknowledges Derrida’s concurrence with Houdebine’s point here that positions was the newest and most important point coming out of the interview.

Finally, to Massey, there is a second aspect of negativity in Derrida’s language of disruption, dislocation, decomposition, and so on. She takes Derrida’s point that this was what needed to be done at that point in time. To Massey, nonetheless, the process of invention seems constrained by deconstruction’s negativity, which makes it harder to get from deconstruction to an understanding of the world as becoming and as the positive creation of the new. Because of this, Massey finds deconstruction unable to engender an appreciation of space as “the sphere of coexisting multiplicity” (2005: 54). She concludes that what is needed is similar to a shift of physical position “from an imagination of a textuality at which one looks, towards recognising one’s place within continuous and multiple processes of emergence” (2005: 54, emphasis in original). This lack of recognition of the theorist’s own place in the processes of spatio-temporal emergence, then, is her final nail in the coffin of deconstruction.

My reading of Derrida: The reply to Massey

Apart from doubting the fairness of judging Derrida’s entire lifework on the basis of a footnote to an interview made in the earlier years of his career (however Derridean this may be), I have two principal quarrels with Massey’s arguments against him.

First, it may be true that some work labelled “deconstruction” has focused excessively on internal fragmentation (Massey, 2005: 51-2). Surely, however, we cannot simply fault Derrida for this development? To a large extent Massey’s problem with deconstruction is not with Derrida’s work as such, but with the way it has been deployed elsewhere, yet she allows her critique of the latter to slip into an argument against the former. At several points in the text Massey puts forward a critique of “deconstruction” only to then admit that her real quarrel is with the way some have drawn on Derrida’s work. For example, she argues that the focus on “text” has led to deconstruction being plagued by a residual but enduring “horizontality” and that as a
consequence of this focus it is hard for deconstruction to provoke an appreciation of spatiality as fully integral with space-time (Massey, 2005: 50). However, she bases this criticism on the argument that “[t]he nature of (the practice of) deconstruction leads it to emphasise the aspect of différance which is differentiation over that which is differal”, but admits that “[t]his is not inherent in the conceptual structure of deconstruction” (Massey, 2005: 51). She explicitly acknowledges Derrida’s frequent emphasising of the joint productivity of spatial and temporal dimensions (Massey, 2005: 51). The “horizontality” Massey detects is then not a necessary consequence of the emphasis in Derrida’s writing, but of Massey’s own emphasis in her reading.

My second quandary is similar and more serious, in that I think Massey produces the problem she claims to name. Firstly, through her “one rather than the other” argument, Massey depicts the alleged focus on “internal fragmentation” as opposed to an “engagement with external relatedness” (Massey, 2005: 52). But the point is precisely that such inside/outside binaries come apart in Derrida’s work. An engagement with external relatedness that did not acknowledge internal fragmentation would do precisely what Massey wants to avoid: it would produce a relation to others which is endlessly the same, since it would take as its reference a self-same presence or Self, “the One”. In this vein, when Massey criticises a “constant reproduction of the binary Same/Other” (Massey, 2005: 50) which leads to horizontality and failure to emphasise affirmation, she is actually affirming rather than opposing Derrida’s point. Derrida argues that in the metaphysical tradition, presence elevates itself in terms of binaries whereby difference is negatively marked. What deconstruction does is not simply to note these, but precisely to emphasise through its double movement how they make (im)possible the emergence of something different, or other. Moreover, terms such as différance and trace are used to mark a receptiveness to an asystematic reserve, a non-present remainder or heterogeneous other in excess of all structures whilst also making them possible. As such, deconstruction affirms an inappropriable difference as that which may yet come to transform whatever we inherit.
Second, and in the same vein, Massey builds her argument on a dichotomisation of the “positive” and the “negative” that she fails to justify or properly explain. It remains unclear why a “setting aside” must be thought of as a bad “negative”, if by that we mean the opposite of something designated as good “positive”. Massey’s argument that “negative language” (of disruption, dislocation, decomposition) would constrain the process of invention is purely based on the claim that deconstruction imagines a textuality “at which one looks”, instead of recognising one’s place within continuous and multiple processes of emergence (Massey, 2005: 54, emphasis in original). However, one of Derrida’s key points, as outlined above, is precisely one’s deep implication in text – the reader as “the other writer”.

Finally, then, when Massey quotes Derrida to the effect that spacing “marks what is set aside from itself, what interrupts every self-identity” she highlights only the “setting-aside” and skims over the “interrupting” that is pointed out by Derrida in the second clause. It is therefore Massey’s emphasis that purports a starting from “the One”, not Derrida’s spacing. I see no reason why we need to read Derrida with such a skewed emphasis. Derrida’s insistence seems to be rather on the simultaneity of these moves, if not the actual inverse thereof. In a sense, through his Levinasian influence, Derrida imagines the Other as above and beyond being, as “absolute alterity and anteriority” (Wortham, 2010: 11, my emphasis); “an other greater and older than I am … precedes me” (Derrida, 2003a: 134). The linear timeline that Massey seems to imply in her imagination of spacing as “first the One, then the Other” is hers, not Derrida’s. The important point, I believe, is Derrida’s emphasis on spacing as marking “the irreducibility of the other” in relation to the “nothing” that he agrees with Houdebine to call a “position” (Derrida, 1987 [1972]: 94, cited in Massey, 2005: 53).

To sum up, then, I have examined Massey’s reading of Derrida, which claims that his “spacing” results in a negatively defined difference that starts from “the One”. I have argued that her analysis does not hold up under scrutiny. In fact, it is Massey’s emphasis that purports a starting from “the One”, not Derrida’s spacing. Therefore, on these grounds, it is premature to dismiss Derrida as inspiration for writing towards
her particular goal: thinking the kind of lively, open space that could allow for coeval multiplicities. However, there is a second critique of relevance here, that by Hutchings.

**Hutchings on Derrida**

Hutchings, like Massey, sees great potential in Derrida’s work with view to her particular project of thinking the present of world politics as heterotemporality, “ultimately neither one present nor many presents, but a mutual contamination of ‘nows’ that participate in a variety of temporal trajectories, and which do not derive their significance from the one meta-narrative about how they all fit together” (Hutchings, 2008: 166). Hutchings sees Derrida, together with Deleuze, as a source from which we can draw inspiration for a more promising anti-historicist project (2008: 21, 24).

**Hutchings’ reading of Derrida: The good bits**

Hutchings suggests that Derrida’s arguments “help to dispel the ‘heroic’ conception of politics that haunts both world politics and the ways in which it is theorised” (2008: 24). She also points to others, like Chakrabarty in his lived experience “time-knots” (2000: 112) and Spivak in her “history of the vanishing present” (1987: 197-221; 1999: 238), who have drawn on Derrida to elaborate alternative notions of time in an Asian context. She reads how, for both thinkers, Derrida’s work is important because it insists on “the present as never being fully present and therefore capable of being known and controlled, whether from the point of view of the political subject ... or of the theorist or historian” (Hutchings, 2008: 167).

Hutchings is particularly interested in how Derrida is able to think a heterotemporality of sorts through the messianic and the spectre. To Derrida, *différence* is simultaneously irreducible to and constitutive of presence. It exceeds what may be understood as “present”, in the “present”. Therefore, in the “here-now”, deconstruction opens up to traces of the “other” still to arrive. In exposing itself to

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65 I too appreciate the work of these thinkers who nonetheless, despite being motivated largely by the same problematic of unitary history, differ in their projects from what I am trying to do in this thesis, largely because they are addressing a different power relation than that of “rising China” and “the West”.

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“the experience of the impossible”, such as forgiveness of the unforgivable, uninventable invention, or decision at the point of radical undecidability, deconstruction works for a rethinking of possibility as such. We are urged to think possibility beyond the already possible, what in a sense is no longer possible in fundamental terms. The emphasis is on an unpredictable, unprogrammable future that deconstruction seeks to affirm, and to which I return in my conclusion. In this sense, to Derrida, all experience is “Messianic” in structure, by which he means that what is said and done in the present is always oriented towards a promise of the future as “the condition for the redemption of its meaning” (Hutchings, 2008: 168).

This future-oriented “presence” is moreover inhabited and structured by “spectrality”. A “spectre” in Derrida’s work marks deconstruction’s imagining of a non-present remainder that works in every text, entity, being or “presence”. Like a ghost it is a kind of non-present being-there, and such spectral remainders include différance, as well as other Derridean concepts such as trace, cinder, supplement, and so on. In being-there as neither properly present nor properly absent, the spectre is always more and less than one; plus d’un, more than one / one no more (Derrida, 1994). As a revenant it begins or comes by coming back. For this reason, the issue of the spectre reflects on an unknowing anticipation of a future appearance, or a future yet to appear. As a troubled memory, the spectre is less backward looking than projecting that which has not yet been exorcised and thus remains to come (Derrida, 1994). For this reason the spectre is always untimely, irreducible to an intact or self-contained present, its time is “out of joint” (Derrida, 1994). In this way, the indeterminacy of the future is inherent in the spectral structure of the present and it is impossible in any particular present to exorcise the number of spectral pasts and futures that inhabit it (Hutchings, 2008: 168).

66 As such, Messianicity is connected to a number of Derrida’s concepts, such as originary affirmation and the structure of the promise; to the “yes, yes” and to the future or the other “to come” as effect, possibility or condition of différance (Wortham, 2010: 102).
Hutchings’ reading of Derrida: The critique

Hutchings’ critique that Derrida fails to think heterotemporalities in the present is tricky given Derrida’s project to deconstruct the presence/absence binary. She takes what she perceives as Derrida’s failure to think multiplicity in the present as a consequence of his thinking about Messianism and spectrality. To Hutchings, the quasi-Messianism that Derrida retains in his understanding of the temporal structure of politics (or the political) makes it possible for him to theorise spectrality, but not plurality in the present (Hutchings, 2008: 168). Through it “other times” work as a source of “ethical imperative” for a politics of memory and the “promise of the future”. These “other times”, however, “are identified with an unrepresentable supplement to mainstream representations of the meaning of times, and therefore with what cannot be known and can only be hoped for” (Hutchings, 2008: 168). To Hutchings, Derrida’s discussion of the implications of this for theorising the present is primarily interested in the impossibility of doing justice to spectrality, arguing that the only way to keep the promise of the future open is to acknowledge that theorising will inevitably fail to do justice to the indeterminacy of the future (Chambers, 2003: 82-94; Hutchings, 2008: 168). On Hutchings’ reading:

[p]aradoxically, the acknowledgement of heterotemporality in Derrida’s account of the spectral quality of political time is temporally redeemed, not in a teleological philosophy of history, but as a temporal orientation that operates as a ‘quasi-transcendental’ condition of the critical interrogation of both law and history (Hutchings, 2008: 168, emphasis in original).

Hutchings further notes how Derrida, in Philosophy in a Time of Terror (Borradori, 2003), clearly identifies this temporal orientation towards the promise of the future with an unachievable idea of Europe. This, she argues, allocates universal relevance to Enlightenment thinking, albeit not identified with a universal end of history (Borradori, 2003: 116; Hutchings, 2008: 168). For this reason, she argues, Derrida provides a partial alternative only to the ways of thinking world-political time that she criticises in her book, as described in the first part of this chapter. She finds useful his displacement of the notion that politics is dependent on controlling or making time,
and of the imagination of a *timely* political theory able to grasp the essence and direction of the present.

The failure, as she understands it, lies in Derrida’s inability to think heterotemporality as anything other than spectral. To Hutchings, spectres in Derrida’s work “mark the limits of representation, operating on the boundaries of political time but never wholly inside it” because “to bring them inside political time is necessarily to subsume them under a false master-narrative” (Hutchings, 2008: 169). Therefore, any thinking of heterotemporality in other than spectral terms would involve a claim to presence and the hierarchical comparative ordering of times that necessarily come with it (Hutchings, 2008: 169). To Hutchings, however, the danger of this thinking is that “in an effort to avoid this kind of philosophical hubris, the theorist falls back into a default position in which ‘other times’ are, quite literally, unthinkable except in so far as they serve the ethical purpose of ensuring theoretical humility” (Hutchings, 2008: 169). This “unthinkable” status of other times in the present is why Hutchings ultimately finds Derrida incomplete for a rethinking of world-political time as multiplicity in the present.

*My reading of Derrida: The reply to Hutchings*

I think Hutchings is right in reading in Derrida’s work an emphasis on the future and on “other times” as unthinkable. “Other times” are indeed associated by Derrida with “an unrepresentable supplement … and therefore with what cannot be known and can only be hoped for” (Hutchings, 2008: 168). This unthinkable difference is key to Derrida’s idea of justice and an aspect of his thinking that is necessary for thinking the fragmented and haunted present, the time “out of joint”. However, I am not entirely convinced by her implication that any other way of thinking heterotemporality is impossible to Derrida because it would necessarily involve a claim to presence and thus hierarchical ordering of times.

In *Specters of Marx* (1994), where much of Derrida’s views on Messianicity and spectrality are outlined, inheritance involves an injunction or demand to respond; we affirm what we inherit only by making decisions which must occur among plural
possibilities. These are plural possibilities precisely in the “here-now” (Wortham, 2010: 195). These plural possibilities in the “here-now” can be read as a form of heterotemporality. The dislocation of meaning, or better perhaps the plurality of possible meanings, or doings, that reside in every “here-now” is a fragmentation that I think describes precisely a “mutual contamination of ‘nows’” (Hutchings, 2008: 166). I illustrate such heterotemporalities by example in chapter 5. Hutchings’ concern is with concepts of “world-political time”, which may be why she never mentions the spacing that is so central to Massey’s attempt to think “space” differently. I think Hutchings underestimates Derrida’s ability to rethink this particular kind of difference precisely because she does not pay attention to spacing and its ability to articulate spatiotemporal difference, and thus Massey’s “plurality of trajectories” or “simultaneity of stories-so-far” (2005: 9, 12, 24, 54, 80, 130) that I think are a parallel to Hutchings’ “mutual contamination of ‘nows’” (2008: 166). Let me specify what I mean through discussing what I think are two different forms in which difference appears in Derrida.

A first form of difference (différance) that I think we can read in Derrida is a form of fathomable difference. This is a difference between terms that is understandable to us (if not as a complete or singular meaning or presence). I believe that this is what Massey is getting at with her focus on the potential ability of spacing and différance to produce a form of affirmative, positive multiplicity through spacing as marking both spatial difference and temporal deferral. The reason why Massey reads this différance as starting from “the One” stems, as I have argued above, from her lack of attention to a second form of différance, that which precisely positions something or someone vis-à-vis an irreducibly absolute and anterior Other.

The reason why I think Hutchings downplays the potential seen by Massey is correspondingly because she is concerned primarily with this second form of difference (différance) that I think we can read in Derrida, namely the unfathomable différance of the absolute Other. With respect to this Other, Hutchings finds herself in a form of catch-22 with Derrida. The Other is only truly Other insofar as it remains unfathomable to us. Once we (think we) understand the Other, it ceases to be Other –
it has been tamed, eradicated, domesticated. For this reason it is unavoidable that “Other times” are associated with “an unrepresentable supplement ... and therefore with what cannot be known and can only be hoped for” (Hutchings, 2008: 168). It lies within the definition of “Other times” that they are unrepresentable. For this reason, if Hutchings wants for “other times” to be representable, yet be that of the truly Other, I do not see how she could have both in the “present”.

I read these two forms of difference as running alongside one another in Derrida’s work, the fathomable and the unfathomable, différance as representable and unrepresentable, plus d’un. This is not to say that they are discrete, rather they are mutually supportive and interdependent. Throughout this thesis I aim to stay sensitive to both: the “representable” or fathomable différance that enables us to think spacing between multiple trajectories à la Massey, and the irreducibly unrepresentable or unfathomable Other that leaves them open to the impossible future “to come” (avenir/à venir). Such an aim or hope, itself perhaps impossible to fulfil, is what I think can imbue our thinking with the openness and liveliness that Massey calls for (2005: 19), and that can inspire a thinking of Hutchings’ “mutual contamination of ‘nows’” (2008: 166). I keep this play of differences and deferrals in mind throughout the following chapters, and return more explicitly to the (im)possibility of thinking them in the conclusion.

Finally, like Hutchings, I am uneasy with Derrida’s association in Philosophy in a Time of Terror (and elsewhere) of the possibility of a future with democracy, Europe and Enlightenment thought (Borradori, 2003: 116, 120-1; Hutchings, 2008: 168, for a similar critique see David-West, 2009: 226, 231). However, I believe we can build on Derrida’s general strategy of deconstruction and draw inspiration from his thinking on the “democracy to come” without replicating this possible Eurocentrism. This is a project that I aim to further through this thesis, and on which I will comment more specifically in my conclusion.
BEGINNING TO STEP UP TO THE CHALLENGE: BAUDRILLARD

Having introduced Derrida by way of critiques of his text, I next turn to the work of a second thinker whose language and thought I find useful for this thesis: Jean Baudrillard. This may seem paradoxical in view of Massey’s critique of Derrida, as Baudrillard too is often thought of as a thinker of negativity, death and absence (Norris, 1990: 166). To my knowledge, none of Fabian, Massey, Inayatullah and Blaney or Hutchings have shown particular interest in Baudrillard’s work. ⁶⁷ Although both Derrida and Baudrillard are often called upon as representatives of some popular “postmodernism”, academic literatures rarely bring the two together, and when they do they tend to do so for the sake of contrast. ⁶⁸ Nonetheless, I argued in the previous chapter that deconstruction and reversibility speak to the same potentials. In the remainder of this chapter I will return to Baudrillard’s work in order to explain in somewhat more detail some of the concepts that are central to Baudrillard’s work, and how I read them alongside those of Derrida.

“Simulation” and “simulacra” are perhaps the terms most associated with Baudrillard’s work. Baudrillard introduced his idea that we have entered an era of simulation in his 1976 book *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1993 [1976]), expanding on the notion in his 1978 essay “The precession of simulacra”, republished in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994 [1981]).

Baudrillard famously introduces this volume with a (recycled) fable where an imperial cartographer draws “a map so detailed that it ends up covering the territory

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⁶⁷ Though Massey has mentioned him briefly and sceptically for enjoying “depthlessness” of space (Massey, 2001: 15).

⁶⁸ This is certainly the case for the most famous and influential critique of Baudrillard’s work, Christopher Norris’ *Uncritical Theory* (1992). This book juxtaposes Derrida and Baudrillard, where the “good” poststructuralism of the former is used to criticise and dismiss the “bad” postmodernism of the latter. In the wider literatures, one writer is often drawn upon to accuse the other of political conservatism. For example, Graham Coulter-Smith contrasts Derrida’s alleged “delirious free play of the signifier” to Baudrillardean thought tainted by “the criticality of humanist Marxism” (Coulter-Smith, 1997: 92). Venkateshwar Rao claims the contrary, that “[u]nlike Derrida, whose politics is confined to publicising his own brand of flippant philosophy called deconstruction, Baudrillard employs his philosophical skills to grapple with the political problems facing the world” (Rao, 2005). Having said this, an increasing number of scholars have countered such tendencies and drawn on the two in conjunction, particularly with regards to the issues discussed in chapter 5 of this thesis (Rajan, 2002; McMillan and Worth, 2003; Mitchell, 2006: 271, 282).
exactly” only to see it gradually fall into ruin. Today, Baudrillard argues, simulation is no longer that of territory, referential being or substance:

[i]t is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it ... But it is no longer a question of either maps or territories. Something has disappeared: the sovereign difference, between one and the other, that constituted the charm of abstraction (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 1).

What has been lost, he argues, is metaphysics: “[n]o more mirror of being and appearances, of the real and its concept” (1994 [1981]: 2).

In this work, Baudrillard explains that simulation is not feigning, pretending or creating an illusion, but reproducing the real to the point where copy and original are no longer distinguishable one from the other (1994 [1981]: 3-4). The operation is no longer one of imitation, reduplication or parody, but of substituting signs of the real for the real itself (1994 [1981]: 4). By doing so, simulation threatens the reality principle, the distinction of true from false. For example: is somebody who simulates symptoms of illness (rather than feigns them) ill or not (1994 [1981]: 3)? Could you simulate an armed hold-up (1994 [1981]: 20)?

Baudrillard explains this in terms of successive phases of the image:

[1] it is the reflection of a profound reality ...  
[2] it masks and denatures a profound reality ...  
[3] it masks the absence of a profound reality ...  

These phases of the image correspond to what are later in the same volume referred to as three orders of simulacra:

[1] simulacra that are natural, naturalist, founded on the image, on imitation and counterfeit, that are harmonious, optimistic, and that aim for the restitution or the ideal institution of nature made in God’s image;  
[2] simulacra that are productive, productivist, founded on energy, force, its materialization by the machine and in the whole system of production – a Promethean aim of a continuous globalization and expansion, of an indefinite liberation of energy (desire belongs to the Utopias related to this order of simulacra);
[3] simulacra of simulation, founded on information, the model, the cybernetic game - total operationality, hyperreality, aim of total control (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 121).

Later, Baudrillard added a fourth order of simulacra, that of the fractal: “[a]t the fourth, the fractal (or viral, or radiant) stage of value, there is no point of reference at all, and value radiates in all directions, occupying all interstices, without reference to anything whatever” (Baudrillard, 1993 [1990]: 13). Although some have claimed this to be a genuinely new stage (Gane, 2000: 22, 57-62), most thinkers understand it as a variant of the third order (or fourth phase) (Butler, 1999: 46; Hegarty, 2004: 64). Where, later in this thesis, I draw on Baudrillard’s notion of the viral I intend it to be read as a variant of the third order “simulacra of simulation”.

The shift “from signs that dissimulate something to signs that dissimulate that there is nothing” is crucial because the real is no longer what it once was. In place of “the truth” we have a myriad of truths taking the shape of signs of reality and myths of origin (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 6). The closer artificial signs are to the real, the more indistinguishable the simulated and the real, to a point where “it is now impossible to isolate the process of the real, or to prove the real” (1994 [1981]: 21). In this sense, all hold-ups are now simulated, because they are inscribed in advance “in the decoding and orchestration rituals of the media, anticipated in their mode of presentation and possible consequences” (1994 [1981]: 21).

By this logic, one of Baudrillard’s key arguments is that what characterises the current era is the shift from the real to the “hyper-real”, the “more real than real”. As reality retreats into the image and the image ironically absorbs the space of the real, the hyper-real can no longer be “the mirror of reality” (Zurbrugg, 1997: 12, see also Mike Gane in Smith, 2010: 96). He thus emphasises with regards to the phases of the image that the system now is “a gigantic simulacrum – not unreal, but a simulacrum” (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 6). Hyper-reality thus belongs to the third order forms of simulacra, as opposed to for example Marxist theories of alienation which belonged to the phase of second order simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 1, see also Mike Gane
in Smith, 2010: 96). Although there has never been a true real known to us, there has "never been a world realer than ours: everywhere reality is enhanced, multiplied, brought to us, we to it" (Hegarty, 2004: 9).

**Reading Baudrillard and Derrida together**

Why this digression into Baudrillard's view of the hyper-real? Although this argument will be more fully explored as the analysis unfolds in subsequent chapters, I want to end this one by beginning to suggest that the work of each of these two thinkers can emphasise a reading of the other that is helpful to my enquiry. We can strengthen the elements of Derrida that let us think coeval multiplicities through bringing in the vocabulary of Baudrillard. Likewise, Derrida can help us emphasise the possibility of reading in Baudrillard's work the openness that comes with the trace. Each thinker can be read in different ways, in ways that point to closures and ways that point to openings. I want to use these thinkers to read each other in a way that brings out their potential for thinking coeval multiplicities.

Although “deconstruction” is a key term in Derrida’s work, and “simulacra” a key term in Baudrillard's, both terms are deployed by both writers. However, Baudrillard uses the term “deconstruction” without properly explaining what he means by it (for example 1981 [1972]: 135, 161). Similarly, when Derrida uses the term “simulacrum”, he seems to denote by it either a simple similarity (for example 2005 [2003]-a: 11, and possibly 1976 [1967]: 240), or, more often, what Baudrillard would term second order dissimulation (for example 2005 [2003]-a: 11, 34; 1995 [1989]-a: 234, 235-6). Because of this unclear use of the terms, I will not dwell here on comparing their use.

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69 Apter and Saich have drawn on Baudrillard to write of the simulacrum in the Chinese context. In their study of Mao's period in Yan'an (1936-1947) as a utopic republic, they describe it as a simulacrum, which they take to mean a "meaning-space" (Apter and Saich, 1994: 6). This appears to refer to the events as a second order simulacrum of ideology and enactment. Where I argue later in this thesis for a reading of "harmonious world" in general, and Expo 2010 in particular, as simulacrum I want to emphasise instead the hyper-real of a third order simulacrum of simulation. In this sense, my reading differs from Apter and Saich's. I will argue in the conclusion that we do not see in today's China a concentration of meaning into a "meaning-space" in the way Apter and Saich discuss it, but that we can rather observe a transition into "hyper-meaning", where the metaphysical possibility of the concept has disappeared under its own weight. Whether this is a question of Apter and Saich's reading, or if there has been a shift in symbolic register since Yan'an, is not a question to be discussed within the scope of this thesis.
by the two writers. When I write “deconstruction” I refer to Derrida’s term, and when I write “simulation”, “simulacrum” or “simulacra” it is with reference to Baudrillard, unless otherwise stated.

**What Baudrillard can bring out in Derrida**

Some readers of Baudrillard have found Derrida too attached to the real, and (despite Massey’s argument to the contrary) as too driven by a productivist impulse (Coulter, 2005, see also Baudrillard, 1981 [1972]: 160). On one of the rare occasions that one of the two thinkers commented on the work of the other, Baudrillard indicated a similar attitude to Derrida’s work:

> [deconstruction] exhausts itself in passing the world through the sieve of the text, going over and over the text and the exegesis with so many inverted commas, italics, parenthesis and so much etymology that there is literally no text left. There are remnants of a forced organization of meaning, a forced literalism of language…. Deconstruction has something of the homoeopathy of difference about it; it is an analytics of trace elements (Baudrillard, 1996 [1990]: 25).

In an April 2003 interview with Paul Hegarty, Baudrillard similarly concluded: “I admire Derrida, but it’s not my thing…” (Hegarty, 2004: 139, see also 145). On this view, then, Baudrillard is more interested in subtraction, Derrida (ironically) in deconstructive addition and accumulation (Coulter, 2005). Yet we do not need to choose. Some have, like myself, seen more commonality and complementary difference between Baudrillard and Derrida, especially as they touch on terrorism, 9/11 and the autoimmune that I discuss in chapter 5.70 Here, I read Derrida to largely follow on Baudrillard’s argument that the Gulf War “did not take place” (Baudrillard, 1991), in his comments on the autoimmune and a globalisation that he claims “does not take place … It is a simulacrum”, making 9/11 “a strange ‘war’ without war” (Derrida, 2003a: 121-123, 117).

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70 For example McMillan and Worth (2003). Baudrillard and Derrida met in debate on this matter on February 19, 2003 at the Maison des cultures du monde in Paris, where they were principal participants in a discussion entitled “Why (the) war?” (Pourquoi la guerre?) (for a summary, see Daubigny, 2003).
Reading Derrida alongside Baudrillard can help guard against an interpretation of the former as too enchanted with the “real” and with prioritising “positivity” over “negativity” (as I have argued Massey does in her own argument for space). The space I offer in response to Massey’s challenge to think “coeval multiplicities” may not then fully satisfy her reading of what this term would mean (this is the “qualification” of my stepping up to the challenge of those who initially posed it). One of the reasons I deviate from Massey’s own reading of time-space is what I find a problematic reliance on the “real” and its relation to representation. Massey writes, in a critique of de Certeau: “The map is not the territory…. We may … take the path to be the real path (not a representation/conceptualisation). It is not the map; it is the territory itself” (2005: 28), and further on Lévi-Strauss: “‘Real space’ … is confused once again with representation” (2005: 38). This is where I find Baudrillard more challenging, and more promising, and where I think his work can help along a reading of Derrida that differs in its aims from Massey’s.

As we have seen from Massey’s and Hutchings’ critiques, some have read Derrida as wanting when it comes to thinking “other times”. Although I have already argued that such a reading is not necessary, I want to take measures against leaving the imagination of all things “different” from the European experience as simply “unfathomable”. I want to draw on Derrida in a way that shakes deconstruction loose from its privileging of enlightenment thought that Hutchings criticises. I do so through drawing on Chinese experiences, but also through the reading of Derrida’s work alongside Baudrillard’s. I thus emphasise, in chapter 4, a reading of various simultaneous temporalities as they appear at Expo 2010. In chapter 5 I also read Derrida’s notion of the autoimmune with Baudrillard’s similar conception of cancer, in order to emphasise the proliferation of the sign and the spatial separation of “positions”, whilst maintaining the focus on “mutual contamination” that Hutchings finds crucial.

**What Derrida can bring out in Baudrillard**

If Baudrillard can add something to a reading of Derrida, so too can Derrida be drawn on to read Baudrillard in a way that avoids the totalising logic and closure that some
have read into his work. Most notably, some have read Baudrillard’s “orders” of simulacra or “phases” of the image as implying a linear notion of time, a taxonomy of stages. This is a common interpretation of Baudrillard’s opening lines of *Simulacra and Simulation* where the “territory no longer precedes the map [but now it is] the map that precedes the territory” (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 1). Jeppe Strømsbjerg, for example, picks up on this Baudrillardean *no longer*:

> [t]hus, like accounts of globalization, which pose an epochal break between a modern territorial geography and a postmodern global politics, so this notion of a present rupture ‘where the territory *no longer* precedes the map’ is problematic (Strømsbjerg, 2010: 69, emphasis in original).

Strømsbjerg argues, in his view in opposition to Baudrillard, that the “precedence of the map over the territory is not a postmodern phenomenon, but rather a core function of the geometric map and the epistemic rules that inform this” (2010: 87). “Taken literally”, he continues, “Baudrillard’s statement logically presupposes a time where the territory preceded the map”, which Strømsbjerg goes on to show is inaccurate, because maps cannot be understood as ever simply representing space – their relation is one of “construction” (2010: 87-8). Strømsbjerg’s reading of Baudrillard is plausible, if indeed “taken literally”, and I agree with his point about the map never having been a representation. Nonetheless, I think (with Derrida’s help) that we can read Baudrillard differently.

Despite attempts to marry Baudrillardean temporality with notions of teleological time (Hughes, 2011), Baudrillard thinks of time in terms of recycling, rather than linearity or teleology (I expand this argument in chapter 4). As a consequence, we need not read Baudrillard’s successive phases of the image, or orders of simulacra, as aligned in linear time.71 Likewise, when Baudrillard writes of the territory “no longer” preceding the map (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 1), or of metaphysics being “lost” (1994 [1981]: 2), we do not need to take this to imply that “once” the real was fully present and true, or that metaphysics was once unproblematically possible. The “era of simulation” (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 2), then, need not be understood as temporally

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71 This point has also been argued by Hegarty (2004: 49-51).
fixed or discreet. Baudrillard’s description of the simulacrum as “pure” (1994 [1981]: 6) should be similarly qualified, as it is not “pure” in the sense in which the term is commonly used, but is always contaminated by recycling.

Derrida helps me follow Baudrillard’s “recycling” through and read the simulacrum as always contaminated. I am not claiming that Derrida does not, too, slip into the occasional all-to-easy mobilisation of “pure” and “always”, as when he writes to the effect that “[t]he word ‘history’ doubtless has always been associated with the linear consecution of presence”.72 He too deploys “stages”, for example when he describes three moments of the autoimmune (Derrida, 2003a: 94ff.). Nonetheless, Derrida seems more insistent on the incompleteness of any such “stage” and explicit that these moments “cannot be distinguished; they feed into and overdetermine one another. They are, at bottom, the same” (Derrida, 2003a: 100). In this way, Derrida is more explicit about the “mutual contamination” that Hutchings emphasises, which is why he can help reinforce a reading of such traces or impurities as always already there in Baudrillard’s work.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have traced the emergence of the problematic of allochrony, or the difficulty to think coeval multiplicities, and the call to face the challenge this presents for rethinking time and space. I have begun to suggest that Baudrillard and Derrida can be read in ways that make them promising for negotiating the allochrony problematique. With regards to this problematique, Massey argues:

not just that the spatial [and, I add, the temporal] is political (which, after many years and much writing thereupon, can be taken as given), but rather that thinking the spatial [and temporal] in a particular way can shake up the manner in which certain political questions are formulated, can contribute to political arguments already under way, and – most deeply – can be an essential element in the imaginative structure which enables in the first place an opening up to the very sphere of the political (Massey, 2005: 9).

72 In Positions (1987 [1972]: 56. Massey too points this out when she cites this passage, in Massey, 2005: 49, see also Derrida, 1976 [1967]: 85)
I too aim to furnish such a “shaking up” of the way we formulate our questions about China in the (harmonious) world, inspired by the “shifts” in certain (theoretical) quarters in the way in which progressive politics can be imagined, but also by the scepticism to this notion of a new, progressive politics.

I argue that deconstruction and reversibility speak to the same potentials and that the work of Derrida and Baudrillard can emphasise a reading of the other that is helpful to my enquiry. I argue that we can strengthen the elements of Derrida that let us think coeval multiplicities through bringing in the vocabulary of Baudrillard. Likewise, Derrida can help us emphasise the possibility of reading in Baudrillard’s work the openness that comes with the trace. Each thinker can be read in different ways, in ways that point to closures and ways that point to openings. As they would insist, drawing inspiration from their work cannot be a question of application, but of working in dialogue with and emerging with something appropriately different. In the remaining chapters of this thesis I use these thinkers to read each other in a way that aims to bring out their potential for thinking coeval multiplicities.
3 “Harmonious world” in Chinese academic discourse

When Hu Jintao’s twin policy concepts of “harmonious society” and “harmonious world” were first used in minor contexts in 2003-4 and more forcefully launched in 2004-5, they reinforced an interest amongst scholars in traditional readings of “harmony” as a basis for rethinking China’s relation to the world. A perhaps unintended consequence of Hu’s vague concept has been the emergence of a vibrant scholarly debate over what a harmonious world might look like. This debate has been particularly strong within, but not confined to, the discipline of IR, where a debate was already underway over the possibility, necessity or even inevitability of building a “Chinese school” of IR based on Chinese thought and experience. It is these academic debates that deploy the “harmonious world” concept that are under scrutiny in this chapter.

Specifically, I want to explore the assumptions about time, space and difference that underpin the deployment of “harmonious world” in these debates. A significant portion of the literatures on harmony and harmonious world, albeit not all of them, stress the importance of multiplicity and heterogeneity for proper harmony. One proponent of harmonious world, Wang Yiwei, offers the concept as an alternative to the problematic time-space conceptualisation of “Western thought”:

[i]n their [Westerners’] view, patriotism (爱国主义) and nationalism (民族主义) became separated into a symbol of advanced and backward (先进与落后), sameness and difference (同类与异类). This is a typical case of ‘logic of taking initiative’ (先发逻辑), the implication is ‘your life is in our history’ … Therefore, under the hegemonic speech system of the contemporary world, nationalism has already been derided by the strong, just as though a piece of clothing, worn out by developed countries, was tossed to developing countries (Wang Yiwei, 2006: 16).

In the previous chapter I explored how a number of academic commentators have criticised the tendency to think time and space in a way that aligns spatial difference

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73 This literature has received significant attention over the last decades (see for example Ni Shixiong and Xu Jia, 1997; Wang Yizhou, 2005; Yu Zhengliang, 2005; Qin Yaqing, 2007).
in temporal sequence in the types of western literatures that Wang is attacking here. It is commonly claimed in the wider literatures that Chinese thought does not operate through radical dichotomisation and binaries, which seems to indicate that Chinese imaginations of harmonious world may be able to move outside the allochronic way of thinking (Huang Xiaoming, 2001). In this chapter I examine whether academic texts that in different ways engage the notion of “harmonious world” can avoid this problematic thinking. The question is, do the debates that engage “harmonious world” against the backdrop of ancient Chinese thought offer an alternative to Western allochronic thinking? Do they offer a way to step up to the challenge of thinking “coeval multiplicities”?

In answering this question I draw on Chinese academic texts, chosen as examples of wider tendencies in the debates. In these texts I identify two common imaginations of time and space, or “cosmologies”, that underpin the ways in which academics in the Hu era have written about China’s relation to the world. The first is what I call “unit space”, or a “unit-based cosmology”, that of space as calculable bounded space, as containers of societies. The second is what has been referred to as a space “with no outside” (wuwai 无外), what I call here “holistic space”, or a “holistic cosmology”.

The first kind of space comprises common western conceptualisations of nation states, modernisation and development. “ Cultures”, “societies”, “civilisations” and “nations” are imagined as having an integral relation to bounded spaces, internally coherent and differentiated from each other by separation. “Places” are seen as bounded, with their own internally generated authenticities, defined by their difference from other places that lie outside, beyond their borders (Ashley, 1987; Campbell, 1998).

The second kind of space, “holistic space”, has parallels with some extreme ideas of globalisation as free unbounded space, where everything is always already networked and connected to everything else (Massey, 2005: 81). It is, moreover, prominent in versions of the Chinese concept of Tianxia, or “All-under-heaven”, which has become increasingly popular with both a domestic and an international audience.
The two spatial imaginaries are commonly described as opposites in the wider literatures on China in the world, with one replacing the other. First, it is said, pre-modern China had a holistic view of space. This cosmology was replaced by a modernist territorial imaginary when China had to transform into a modern (nation)state. Now, it is claimed again, the territorial notion of space is no longer plausible under globalisation (Agnew, 1998). Following Callahan's work on maps of national humiliation (2009: 141-73; 2010: Ch. 4) this chapter challenges such notions through arguing that both these spatial imaginaries are working simultaneously in contemporary China.75

Although the two cosmologies are neither opposed nor mutually exclusive, I discuss them in turn in this paper for the sake of clarity. The first part therefore discusses the way unit-based cosmology may imagine the world as allochronic. It outlines the key features of this unit-based imaginary and points to some ways in which building a harmonious world can legitimise allochronic imaginations of unit space. It thereafter pays particular attention to the work of Yan Xuetong (2009b; 2009c; 2011), one of China’s most influential theorists of IR, to show in somewhat more detail how a state centric and thus unit-based cosmology can imagine an allochronically organised harmonious world. Because the vast majority of literatures operate on a unit-based cosmology, most of this chapter focuses on this particular imaginary.

The second part investigates whether the holistic imaginary of a harmonious world repeats the problem of allochrony. It discusses Zhao Tingyang’s redeployment of the Tianxia concept as a Chinese (and better) concept of world order (2005; 2006b; 2009). Zhao is a professor of philosophy at the prestigious Qinghua University, and although he is widely cited in the wider literatures on harmonious world, he presents in many ways an alternative to the literatures that operate through more traditional IR theories. His most influential book, Tianxia system [Tianxia tixi], was first published in 2005 (Zhao Tingyang, 2005). In 2011 a second edition was released including essays discussing his work, but with no changes to his own text, which underlines the

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75 For a theoretical challenge to such ways of periodizing history, and their implications for a future of open politics, see Katleen Davis (2008).
continued importance of this piece. His Tianxia concept is developed at least partly in response to perceived problems in the state system, and aims to do away with them. His claim is that Asian thought does not operate through the self/other distinction of Western thought, that there is no dichotomised other in Tianxia, and hence “no outside”. I question whether he manages to escape from the problematic allochronic way of imagining self-other relations in a harmonious world and whether he can help us think coeval multiplicities.

A VIEW FROM CHINA: UNIT-BASED POLITICAL COSMOLOGY AND HARMONIOUS WORLD

A cosmology that has been predominant in writing on China and its relations to the world is what I call here a unit-based cosmology. What I mean by this is the bounded space of separate and mutually exclusive units that we recognise in particular from much of traditional state centric IR literatures, but which is widespread throughout today’s social sciences. I am by no means the first to identify or criticise this mode of spatialisation. Many have done so before and surely many will do so also in the future. Yet, the unit-based spatial imaginary has a strangely strong hold on our thought and is therefore indispensible to an examination of how we think spatiotemporally about China and harmonious world.

State-centric understandings of China’s harmonious world

What, then, more precisely do I mean by this unit-based cosmology? I use the term “unit-based” here to refer to a particular way of imagining the world akin to a jigsaw puzzle, made up of separate and mutually exclusive units. These units take the form of what some people would call territories, or geobodies.\(^{76}\) The imaginary of discrete state units, with their associated nations, has been of particular concern to the discipline of IR. As Ruggie already explained two decades ago, traditional IR takes as given “the modern form of territoraility ... based on linear, fixed boundaries

\(^{76}\) To the scholar who first used this term, Thongchai Winichakul, the geobody is a discursive construct, an artefact which has come to seem natural: “The geo-body of a nation is a man-made territorial definition which creates effects – by classifying, communicating, and enforcement – on people, things, and relationships” (Winichakul, 1994: 17). For its deployment in the Chinese case see Callahan (2009; 2010: Ch. 4).
separating continuous and mutually exclusive spaces” (Ruggie, 1993: 168). Thus, “[i]t has been the geographical division of the world into mutually exclusive territorial states that has served to define the field of study” (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995: 78). Of course, particular units are often contested. Yet, for territorial units to “function” the basic assumptions of the unit-based cosmology cannot be seriously questioned. The boundaries and meanings of particular units may be under frequent discussion within IR, but the spatial imaginary that makes this discussion possible is seldom scrutinised or paid due attention, particularly in publications specifically concerned with China.

**Spatial units: Inside/outside division**

A vast majority of academic commentary treats “harmonious world” as a straightforward state policy or inherently Chinese idea promoted by the PRC state under Hu Jintao, against the backdrop of the state-centric assumptions that are embedded in our most common approaches to IR. The imagination of separate state units rests on the possibility of imagining a separating border between them. Inayatullah and Blaney argue that the European experience of religious wars of the 17th century imbued the idea of difference with connotations of enmity and radical othering (Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004). The state system, which is perhaps the clearest example of the unit-based political cosmology and the consolidation of this kind of imaginary, is said to have emerged from this very particular European experience (Krasner, 2001; Teschke, 2003).

Furthermore, the division of space into units is typically thought of in terms of dichotomies mapping onto the inside/outside of these bounded entities (Massey, 2005: 64). Within the discipline of IR the boundary of the state is closely tied to the idea of sovereignty (Walker, 1993) and also traditionally marks the border distinguishing community from anarchy (Ashley, 1987; 1988). Traditional IR theory, then:

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77 For a few examples, see Liu Xinyu (2005: 41), Liu Dongjian (2006), Sow Keat Tok and Zheng Yongnian (2007), contributions in Guo Sujian and Blanchard (2008a), Sheng Ding (2008), Shi Yinhong (2008b) and Hang Lihua (2010).
not only assumes a particular conception of territory (as clear, closed, fixed) but also tends to render territory in strongly dichotomous terms by way of mapping order/chaos, identity/difference, presence/absence, politics/power, and so on onto the lines and spaces through which global social life becomes intelligible (Delaney, 2005: 37).

Even where there is talk of connection and mutual construction, geographical variation is preconstituted. First the differences between places exist, then those different places come in contact. Social relations may change the preferences and identity of an actor, but the spatial units of interaction are not allowed this same construction.\textsuperscript{78}

This imagination of space and society as neatly conflatable with adjacent borders remains common in the study of China and its relations to the (harmonious) world. It is this conceptualisation of space which provides the basis for the supposed coherence, stability and authenticity to which there is such frequent appeal in discourses of nationalism.\textsuperscript{79} As Gloria Davies (2007) has demonstrated, Chinese scholarship is characterised by a “patriotic worrying” \textit{(youhuan}) which makes this nationalism a marked trait of Chinese IR literatures and certainly of those that follow Hu Jintao in arguing for the construction of a harmonious world. In this tradition, an argument’s strength is judged on how well it helps promote China’s national interest (Cunningham-Cross, 2011: 15).

In fact, the very analytical division between “harmonious society” for domestic use and “harmonious world” for international deployment, which is almost universally accepted also by more “critical” scholars, reflects a classical inside/outside understanding, where a state border separates off national space. Such domestic/international divisions are common in writing about Hu’s harmonious policy in both English language literatures on harmonious world\textsuperscript{80} and in the corresponding Chinese language texts,\textsuperscript{81} as well as in party-state descriptions.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{78} For one example of this, see Feng (2005).
\textsuperscript{79} This tendency is particularly clear in the Chinese calls for (Yu Zhengliang, 2005) and predictions of (Qin Yaqing, 2007) a “Chinese school” of IR (see also Hilal, 2001).
\textsuperscript{80} See for examples Sow Keat Tok and Zheng Yongnian (2007: 4), Zou Keyuan (2011: 8).
\textsuperscript{81} See for example Hang Lihua (2010: 20-1).
As I have shown in chapter 1, what is particular about the “inside” Chinese space in this division, is the privileged access to and understanding of harmony that, as in the policy discourse, is taken to stem from the “culture”, “tradition” or “history” of harmony in China. That harmony is something that “Chinese people”, or “China”, has always understood and cherished is an implication, and often explicitly stated “fact” of most literatures on harmonious world. To Zhan Yunling “from ancient times until today, China has possessed traditional thought and a culture of seeking harmony” (Zhang Yunling, 2008: 4). This claim is taken to be co-supportive of the idea that “the Chinese nation” (Zhonghua minzu 中华民族) has always been a peaceful nation.83 To Ni Shixiong and Qian Xuming:

‘cherishing harmony’, 'harmony with difference’ and such thought penetrates the inner world of the Chinese nation (Zhonghua minzu), taking shape in the Chinese nation ardently loving peace, upholding a harmonious national disposition (minzu xingge 民族性格) and values (Ni Shixiong and Qian Xuming, 2008: 125).

As explained in chapter 1, many debates about harmonious world hinge on the idea of achieving a proper understanding of harmony. As this handful of examples once more indicates, Chinese authors tend to assume that the Chinese nation, or at least parts of it, has privileged access to such understanding. It is from this assumption that the arguments outlined in what follows draw much of their rhetorical force, as well as many of their problems.

Temporal sequence: First inside, then outside

In this unit-based cosmology, not only is space conceived as divided into bounded units, but that system of differentiation is also organised in a particular way. Different “places” are interpreted as different stages in a single temporal development. As argued by Massey, “[a]ll the stories of unilinear progress, modernisation,

82 See for example State Council of the PRC (2006; 2011b: II).
83 See for examples Liu Jianfei (2006), or Yu Xiaofeng and Wang Jiangli (2006). For one recent argument to the contrary that pays specific attention to the idea of harmony, see Wang Yuan-Kang (2011). The term minzu can be variously translated as “nation”, “ethnicity” or simply “people”, and Zhonghua minzu is used in the literatures to indicate a pan-Chineseness, as opposed to division among China’s ethnic minorities and its Han majority.
development, the sequence of modes of production ... perform this operation” (2005: 68). This manoeuvre is oft-recognised throughout the social sciences and humanities, yet remains strong in the academic discipline as well as popular discourse of China’s IR. For example, it has long been seen in debates on China’s rise as a form of “catching up” with the West, as outlined in the introduction to this thesis. It has appeared in debates on China in Asian regionalism, where regionalisation around or involving China is typically characterised as empty, at a low level, or even failed, due to its difference from Europe-based institutions (Miller, 2004; Curley and Thomas, 2006). Moreover it appears in studies of Chinese relations with those conceived of as temporally “behind” inside and outside of China, notably in descriptions of China “exporting development” to parts of Africa, or in representations of relations between more and less prosperous parts of China, where “receiving” areas are characterised as spaces of “lower quality” (populated by “low quality people”) that similarly need to catch up (Bakken, 2000; Nyíri, 2006). Precisely who or what is ahead or behind may differ in these debates, but the underlying imaginary of spatial difference aligned in a historical queue remains the same.

This logic of fore-runners and those that lag behind is a similarly common feature of the debates concerned with harmonious world. In their reference to “harmonious world”, many literatures write in terms of a “first inside, then outside” movement of harmony. For example, one early English language analysis writes of how “‘building a harmonious society’ became ‘building a harmonious world’” (Sow Keat Tok and Zheng Yongnian, 2007: 9). Another English language analysis, by Zou Keyuan, narrates the same linear-causal movement from “internal harmony (harmonious society)” to “external harmony (harmonious world)”, where “the doctrine of ‘harmonious world’ is just an extension of that of ‘harmonious society’” (Zou Keyuan, 2011: 8). This last paper simultaneously identifies Hu's first expression of “harmonious world” with a speech to the Moscow Institute of International Relations on 28 May 2003 (2011: 2, fn. 2), and his first mention of “harmonious society” with the 4th Session of the 16th Party Congress in September 2004 (2011: 8, fn. 30). The linear inside/outside imaginary that projects “external” harmony as “just an extension” of “internal”
harmony is thus so strong that it contradicts the linearity of posited “launch dates” that the author himself identifies, where “harmonious world” was clearly announced before “harmonious society”.\textsuperscript{84}

My point here is not to claim that the idea of harmonious world \textit{really} appeared before that of harmonious society and that the movement was in fact the reverse. Various “launch dates” are identifiable for both concepts, and harmonious society certainly appears as the more developed concept in party-state deployments. Nonetheless, the consistency with which the external is portrayed as a mere extension of the internal is striking, and I have yet to come across an analysis that discusses both concepts and treats it otherwise. Surely, there could be other ways of imagining the spatio-temporal relation between harmonious society and harmonious world. In chapter 5 I examine some such possibilities. My point is that the near-complete absence of such alternative accounts in the academic literatures on harmonious world goes to show how deeply ingrained this particular way of imagining time and space is in our thinking.

The force of this imaginary can also be seen in the tendency in literatures on harmonious world to emphasise how China “itself” needs to be harmonious “first”, before it can work for a harmonious world. This is associated with a linear movement, China’s literal “going out” (走出去) (for example in Sow Keat Tok and Zheng Yongnian, 2007: 10). In this way, many Chinese language articles argue that harmonious world is a “natural extension and development” (自然延伸与发展) where China builds harmonious society in the external arena (Hang Lihua, 2010: 20). In such spatio-temporally linear writing about harmonious world, a number of these texts explicitly deploy the imagery of “backwards countries” or “countries lagging behind” (\textit{luohou guojia} 落后国家) (Wang Yiwei, 2006: 16).\textsuperscript{85} Others take harmony to imply the acceptance only of advanced culture into China, in the process of making China and

\textsuperscript{84} For other texts implying such an inside to outside movement, see Liu Xinyu (Liu Xinyu, 2005: 41). Wang Yiwei (2006), in a slightly different formulation, emphasises that the real achievement of harmonious world originates from China, but belongs to the world (源于中国、属于世界).

\textsuperscript{85} The character hou 后 is a common component in words that designate being behind in space, in terms such as houbian 后边, and also being behind in time, in terms such as youhou 以后, ranhou 然后 or houlai 后来, meaning “afterwards”, as well as in some that are used the mark being behind in either time or space, such as houmian 后面.
the world harmonious (Ni Shixiong and Qian Xuming, 2008: 125). Most importantly, once the story has been told, or more often the assumption has been made, of China and (some) Chinese having privileged access to harmony, it seems only natural that China’s elites should be the forerunners of global harmonisation. In this story, China is the creator of “harmonious world” theory, and is “inevitably the principal practitioner of harmonious world” (or that which brings it about, 必将是和谐世界的主要实践者) (Ruan Zongze, 2005: 15).

Elena Barabantseva has convincingly argued that in state-led narratives that draw on a predominantly Marxist legacy, “Chinese dominant discourses on development are trapped in the teleological thinking about a modernisation process, constructing the Chinese nation as somewhat inferior to the ‘developed West’” (Barabantseva, 2012: 65). The unit-based imaginary of harmonious world repeats the spatio-temporal logic of such stories, but draws on broadly Confucian thought to replace “the West” with “China” at the head of its linear imagination of constructing a harmonious world.

**Telos: Harmony as compliance**

This linear “going out” of China, this historical queue, moreover has an endpoint, or telos, towards which its movement is directed. As Barabantseva’s comment shows, teleological thinking, of course, is not unique to discussions of “harmonious world”. Some reflections on China emanating from the West still regularly reflect, in Fukuyama’s footsteps, a linear thinking that asks “how” and “when” China will become a democracy, will become like “us” (for one of the clearest examples, see Gilley, 2004). Nonetheless, this way of thinking does remain strong in academic debates surrounding “harmonious world”, where the term itself is positioned simultaneously as the end and the means to that end, a “blueprint” for future world development [发展蓝图] (Liu Dongjian, 2006: 46). What more precisely it is that is being promoted by this Chinese “going out” varies with different authors, as the meaning of “harmony” is often left undefined and changing in each deployment, or generalised into meaning

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86 This resonates with the attitude towards fine culture of the whitepaper *China’s Peaceful Development*, discussed in the introduction to this thesis, which stated: “Imbued with the belief that one should be as inclusive as the vast ocean which admits hundreds of rivers, the Chinese nation has embraced all that is fine in foreign cultures” (State Council of the PRC, 2011c: IV).
the production (rather than presumption) of consent (Pierre, 2010) or simply “a good social order” (Zhang Qianfan, 2010: 284).

A significant portion of literatures on harmony, albeit not all of them, stress multiplicity as a prerequisite of harmony. Some see the common conflation of “harmony” with “conformity” or “subservience” as a problem. This multiplicity is typically that of “nations”, “civilisations”, or “cultures”, the key units on which the unit-based cosmology operates in the academic literatures and in the policy discourse described at the outset of this thesis. A significant number of texts deploy the term “harmony with difference” (he er butong, 和而不同) to express the need for difference in order to have the balance of separate elements that is harmony. Others use the term “Great Harmony” (Datong 大同) to denote the idea of harmonious world based in Chinese history, which may have less association with underscoring the need for difference. Inequality is often seen as the biggest challenge to building a harmonious world, which seems to accord to some extent at least with the concerns I raised in the previous chapter (Shi Yinhong, 2008a: 81). Respecting cultural multiplicity (尊重文化的多样性) is emphasised as the only way to a harmonious world and the development of “the civilisation of humanity” (人类文明) (Ni Shixiong and Qian Xuming, 2008: 125).

Having said this, a significant number of writers are explicit that the aim of harmony theory, or sometimes what they see as Confucianism more broadly, is the “ultimate goal of harmonizing the world” (Li Chenyang, 2010: 49). To achieve such harmonisation, starting from a world of contradiction and difference, contradiction needs to be resolved. To Liu Dongjian, for example:

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87. This issue is especially highlighted by contributions in Tao et al. (2010a), especially Barr (2010: 74-5, 77).
88. Examples are numerous (Liu Xinyu, 2005: 41; Ruan Zongze, 2005: 14; Yu Xiaofeng and Wang Jiangli, 2006; Fang Xiaojiao, 2008: 69; Ni Shixiong and Qian Xuming, 2008: 125).
89. Again, examples are numerous (Liu Xinyu, 2005: 40; Yu Xiaofeng and Wang Jiangli, 2006; Ni Shixiong and Qian Xuming, 2008: 125). For a discussion of the difference in interpretation of harmony as “harmony with difference” and as “Great Harmony”, see Callahan (2008).
90. For the notion that various or all aspects of society need to be “harmonised” within the larger whole, see also Neville (2010: 69).
91. It is worth noting the resonance of this language of “contradictions” with Marxist texts.
to realise harmonious society, the most important thing is the need to properly harmonise (bixu xietiao hao 必须协调好) the relationships of three aspects, namely: the contradiction (maodun 矛盾) between people and nature, the contradiction between people and people, the contradiction between the people and the government. If it is possible to achieve a proper resolution (tuoshan de jiejue 妥善的解决) to these three aspects of contradiction, then there can be a society facing harmony (Liu Dongjian, 2006: 43).

To Qin Yaqing, harmonious world can only be created based on a similar focus on the melting away of contradiction, although he at first does not appear to see the possibility of a final resolution to contradiction that Liu's “harmonise” (xietiao hao) seems to imply:

harmonious world is also an order that incessantly melts away contradictions (huajie maodun 化解矛盾). International society inevitably realises all sorts of contradictions, old contradictions are resolved, new contradictions can appear again, the era of globalisation is especially this way (Qin Yaqing, 2006: 31).

Yet the appeal of solutions is strong also for Qin, and it is solutions that remain to him the key point of harmony in the text: “only by constructing a harmonious justice foundation for common existence and common development can the fundamental problems of international society be genuinely resolved (zhenzheng jiejue 真正解决) (Qin Yaqing, 2006: 31). Similarly, to Wang Yizhou, there is increasing possibility in a harmonious world to use international law and practice to resolve differences (jiejue fenqi 解决分歧) (Wang Yizhou, 2008: 14). These three accounts take somewhat different views on the nature of contradiction, but they share with each other (and with the literatures on harmonious world more generally) a focus on the resolution (xietiao, jiejue, huajie) of contradiction and divergence (maodun, fenqi).

In a similar way, it is common for scholars who analyze harmony to begin by stressing that it should be a tolerant, open and equal form of “harmony with difference”, only to go on and list the ideas or ways of life that should definitely be excluded, rejected and/or transformed in order to achieve harmony. For example, Qin Zhiyong argues that ways of being as diverse as “extreme individualism, money worship, hedonism, Anarchist mentality and concept in the Western culture are resolutely to be guarded against and rejected” (Qin Zhiyong, 2008: 67). In a similar vein, Ni Shixiong and Qian
Xuming argue that we need to respect civilisational differences, but oppose (those we designate as) terrorists and make everyone understand China (or China’s view), whilst, again, accepting only advanced culture in China (尼世雄和钱新明，2008: 125). Notable here is that Ni and Qian are writing in Chinese to a Chinese audience, who will be all too aware of who are “terrorists” in contemporary China – those imagined as ethno-civilisational others in border regions like Tibet and Xinjiang who are seeking increased or complete autonomy from Chinese rule. The culture or values associated with these groups are also regularly portrayed as “backward” as opposed to the “advanced” cultures that should be accepted (拉菲特，1999: § 4, 5, 6; 尼尔，2006: 92; 凯尔曼，2007: 2; 巴拉班特塞娃，2009: 231; 2012).

Kam Por Yu also stresses that harmony is not unprincipled compromise, and endorses Confucius’ view that “the gentleman stands his ground, and is not moved by popular opinions, much less be shaped [sic.] by them”, which is why “the right kind of harmony is achieved by referring to some principles of proper conduct … [n]ot all claims can be treated as equal” (Yu，2010: 22). One article by Ding Sheng draws on Mencius as a thinker whose ideal is a king that through benevolence has “no rivals in the world” (丁圣，2008: 196). To Confucius, writes Ding, the virtue of noble families is that they “do not worry about poverty, but worry about discontent” (丁圣，2008: 196). He quotes Sunzi’s notion that “to subjugate the enemy’s army without doing battle is the highest of excellence” (丁圣，2008: 197).

Many scholars thus equate “harmonious” with “consensual” (for example Rockman，2010: 199). The literatures on harmony moreover typically stress the values they associate it with as “the only correct goal and the only reachable goal” (秦志勇，2008: 73), or argue, in the context of “harmonious world”, that “choosing ‘peaceful rise’ is on the one hand China’s voluntary action, on the other hand it is an inevitable choice (别无选择)” (刘剑飞，2006: 38). In this way, many literatures repeat Hu Jintao’s notion of harmonious world in these terms.

Not only, then, is there a tendency in the unit-based literatures on harmonious world to engage in “patriotic worrying” that fears discord and opposition. The insistence by
many on harmony as a tolerant, open and equal form of “harmony with difference” is laudable, but it is all too often undermined by positioning harmonious world as the telos of development. Once harmonious world has been positioned as the only correct goal, the temptation is to start singling out disharmonious elements, those who harbour “terrorist” intentions or lack “advanced” culture to contribute with. Indeed, the openness and friendly interaction between cultural, national and civilisational units is still based on some principles of proper conduct. As Yu tells us, these principles must not be defined by popular opinion. The overwhelming sense we are left with, instead, is that it is those who properly understand harmony that must decide on those principles, on whose claims should be treated as equal and whose claims should not. As we have seen, there are strong assertions that the Chinese have privileged access to such understanding, but that (some of) its population consists of backwards low-quality people whose opinions should not sway the mind of the sagely “gentleman”. The implication is that the Chinese political and academic elites that have launched and developed “harmonious society” and “harmonious world” are the ones suitable to decide on such standards. Acting harmoniously, in such a story, means acting in a way that is not discordant with the views of the Chinese elites. If everyone behaves harmoniously, an end-state can be imagined where everyone complies with, or is co-opted by, the Chinese elite’s notion of what is an advanced culture and a “win-win” solution: a harmonious world. As in Ding’s account, it is a state where any enemies or opponents have been subjugated and thus vanished as such. This is an attitude recognisable from some of the policy documents examined in the introduction to this thesis, where the point of “active communication” and “enhanced cooperation” is to create a form of harmonious relation that meant “elimination of differences” (State Council of the PRC, 2010a: V).92

Method: Promoting harmony through hard and/or soft power tools

How, then can such a harmonious world be realised? There appears to be near consensus in the literatures on harmony and harmonious world that the term should

92 For a similar attitude in other party-state documents, see State Council of the PRC (2009a: III), which follows this logic with regards to ethnic groups.
be opposed to conflict. This leads Shi Zhongwen to stress that the doctrine opposes going to extremes, and therefore contradicts what Shi calls “the philosophy of struggle” (Shi Zhongwen, 2008: 40, where “struggle” implies Marxist ideology). Qin Zhiyong similarly stresses the need to turn away from collisions and put the emphasis on “merging different cultures” (Qin Zhiyong, 2008: 73). However, as we have seen, the end-result towards which we should strive, on these views, is a telos to which Chinese people, culture or leaders have privileged access, which leaves little room to ponder whose culture should “merge” into whose (or better, perhaps, be subsumed by whose).

With regards to many parts of the world (such as Ding’s “global south”), the spatiotemporal designation as being “backwards countries” or “countries lagging behind” is often enough for the ideas emanating from that unit not to merit further attention in the merging of cultures (remember, China should accept only advanced culture). The vast majority of literatures on harmonious world instead focus on how this ideal can be merged with, or win out over, “Western culture” or “Western civilisation”. For several writers, there is therefore little doubt against whom any effort to build a harmonious world is directed, and they claim that increasing Chinese soft power can “smash” (打破) Western influence (Fang Xiaojiao, 2008: 68).

At the same time, “China” and “the West” are commonly taken as representative of “the world”. The civilisational essentialism with which posited units are approached means that key thinkers of each of these two “civilisations” are taken to represent “the values” of large swathes of people. To simplify slightly (but not much): if Plato and Confucius both talked about harmony, that means that it is a universalisable value and that all people can agree on it.93

Scholars typically hold that where the realisation of “peaceful coexistence” could be achieved rather passively, building a “harmonious world” requires the promotion of harmony. There is often a recognition that although the end-point of harmony is a

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93 For one clear example of this thinking, see Ba Xiang (2010). Having said this, there are a few texts that engage the notion of harmony in other contexts as well, most notably the volume by Tao et al. (2010a).
state free of discord and competition, this ideal has to compete against other ideas of world order before it can be realised. Most literatures reject the idea of subjugating the opponents of “harmonious world” through military force, but do like Ding retain the idea that they need to be “subjugated” – it is just that such subjugation is better achieved through “soft” rather than “hard” power.

Efforts to promote harmonious world identified in the literatures typically include the setting up of Confucius Institutes (Cai Liang and Song Lilei, 2010: 38; Zou Keyuan, 2011: 11), the 2008 Beijing Olympics (Zou Keyuan, 2011: 11), SCO activity (Ruan Zongze, 2005: 14; Qin Yaqing, 2006: 32; Yu Xiaofeng and Wang Jiangli, 2006) and Expo 2010 Shanghai China which I discuss in the subsequent chapter (Zou Keyuan, 2011: 11). Others imply that a panoptical form of power will suffice to make deviant others conform to the norms of harmony: “[p]owerful societal control will be exerted on individuals by public opinion and by public disapproval of things contrary to good moral standards” (Shi Zhongwen, 2008: 40). What is clear throughout is the need for “reformation” and “education” of elements deemed disharmonious. For example, Zhang Qianfan takes the purported need for reformation to mean that “we need a government that honours virtuous gentlemen and actively inculcates the virtues among people” (Zhang Qianfan, 2010: 302). In the call for education, the hierarchical-temporal relationship between ruler-father and people-infants that I discussed at the outset of this thesis is often highlighted, for example by Roetz’ commentary on Xunzi.94

Having said this, the call to build a harmonious world has also been used to argue in favour of Chinese military capacity, including its naval power (Deng Li, 2009). Although Chinese policy documents stress that violence or threat of violence should be avoided,95 they similarly appear to leave room for means that would traditionally be understood as both “hard”96 and “soft”.97 Others and I have argued elsewhere that

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94 Roetz (2010: 316), which also challenges such a reading.
95 See for example State Council of the PRC (2011c), Wen Jiabao (2010b; 2011).
96 See for example State Council of the PRC (2005a). The white papers on China’s national defence that are published every two years begin in the foreword to reports on 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010 by gesturing towards harmony and diversity (State Council of the PRC, 2004; 2006; 2009b; 2011b).
the dichotomisation of “hard” and “soft” power, or “coercion” and “attraction”, is unstable (Bially Mattern, 2005; Nordin, forthcoming 2012a). One reason for this is that language games can be rhetorically set up in a manner that leaves only one “inevitable choice” as a conceivable option (Bially Mattern, 2005). Another reason is that the imagery of “hard” military power is empirically intermingled with “soft” messages to simultaneously coerce and attract at events that are described as “soft power tools”, such as Expo 2010 (Nordin, forthcoming 2012a). Whatever the means, there is apparent consensus within the literatures that to establish its ideal of harmonious world, China needs to become strong and influential (see for example Zhang Yunling, 2008: 5).

We have thus seen how the literatures on harmonious world that are underpinned by a unit-based cosmology tell a story that organises time and space in a particular way. An assumption is made about the division of space into bounded units, where inside and outside come to respectively connote the presence and absence of community, harmony, and so on. This division lies at the very core of the analytical separation between “harmonious society” for the inside and “harmonious world” for the outside. Moreover, a timeline is imagined that runs from inside to outside. China is ahead, a forerunner in the establishment of harmony that will first be established on the inside, then on the outside. “Harmonious world” becomes both the means and the end to China’s relation to that outside world. What “harmony” means is often left unsaid or implicit and varies from one account to the other, but there is a tendency to conflate harmony with compliance and the absence of discord. However, on the way to establishing the harmonious world that will be agreed on by all, China will have to “subjugate” its opponents through hard and/or soft power. This is a most common way of imagining China’s relation to the harmonious world. In the next section I explore how it is repeated by one of China’s most influential thinkers in IR.

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Yan Xuetong: *Ba* (霸), *Wang* (王) and harmonious world

Professor Yan Xuetong is one of the most influential IR scholars in China, if not the most influential one, as is claimed in his recent book *Ancient Chinese thought, modern Chinese power* (2011, henceforth *Ancient Chinese thought*). Despite being sceptical about the building of a separate Chinese theory of IR, he is a strongly nationalist thinker who engages in ‘patriotic worrying’ based on historical Chinese thought (see for example Yan Xuetong, 2006a). Yan has become famous for his project investigating the philosophy of pre-Qin thinkers such as Guanzi, Laozi, Confucius, Mencius, Mozi, Xunzi and Hanfeizi (see for example Yan Xuetong, 2009c; 2011). Yan launched his project together with colleague Xu Jin in 2005, the same year that Hu Jintao’s “harmonious world” policy was launched to an international audience on a great scale (Yan Xuetong, 2009a: 1). Their first major study was published in 2008 (Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, 2008). Yan’s interest lies in drawing lessons from pre-Qin thinkers for China’s rise. His aim is not to create a separate Chinese theory of IR, but rather to “enrich” existing theories with concepts that derive from Chinese ancient philosophy, especially the seven key thinkers of the pre-Qin era listed above (Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, 2009: 2). These thinkers are his focus in numerous publications in English and Chinese language. His project increased its international reach with the recent collection of a number of his key texts in the English language volume *Ancient Chinese thought* (2011), and a subsequent journal issue of reviews thereof (Chinese Journal of International Politics, 2011).

The key contribution Yan wants to make to IR theory is a re-thinking of world order through ancient Chinese concepts, particularly the differentiation between two kinds of superpower: *ba* (霸) and *wang* (王). These are popular concepts in the literatures on harmonious world, and especially *ba* appears in many texts in various constellations.99 *Wang* is usually translated as “the kingly way” or “true kingship”,

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98 The pre-Qin era (先秦) refers to the Spring-Autumn and Warring States periods. It is said that in this period China consisted of a number of feudal states that were eventually unified in the Qin dynasty around 220BC.

99 In the literatures that deploy the term, harmonious world is typically contrasted with hegemonism (*baquan zhuyi* 霸权主义) (Liu Jianfei, 2006; Yu Xiaofeng and Lin Guozhi, 2006: 109; Fang Xiaojiao, 2008: 71; Wang Yizhou, 2008: 14; Zhou Jianming and Jiao Shixin, 2008: 21), harmony theory with hegemonic
which is also the case in Yan's earlier English language article that became a chapter in *Ancient Chinese thought* (see Yan Xuetong, 2008: 136, 137, 152, corresponding to chapter 2 in the book). In the book's translation, however, *wang* is rendered as “humane authority” because according to the editors “[o]bviously, Yan is not arguing for the reestablishment of a monarchical system led by one sage who would save the world with his moral goodness” (2011: ix). *Wang* is a benevolent kind of superpower, based on morality, sagely understanding and political power.

The concept that works as a counterpoint to *wang* is *ba*, which is consistently translated as “hegemony” or “hegemon” (Yan Xuetong, 2008: 136, 137; 2011: ix, 71), or sometimes as “lord protector” (Yan Xuetong, 2008: 136). *Ba* is not quite as bad as *qiang* (强), translated as “tyrant”/”tyranny” (Yan Xuetong, 2011: 71) or “might” (Yan Xuetong, 2008: 136), since Yan holds that the former “does not imply external aggression or bullying of small countries” (Yan Xuetong, 2008: 136, note 2).

Nonetheless, *ba* functions as the bad to *wang*’s good; if *wang* (to be a sage king) means “to lead the world”, *ba* (to be a hegemon) means “to dominate the world” (Yan Xuetong, 2011: 71). To Yan, pre-Qin thinkers can thus offer a distinction between *ba*-style power, based mostly on military and economic force and enforcement, and *wang*-style authority, based primarily on legitimacy and trust. On this distinction, to Yan, “[p]olice and doctors may be said to represent power and authority, respectively” (2011: 64).

“Harmonious world” is not the central concept of *Ancient Chinese thought* or of Yan's wider scholarship, but nonetheless comes to operate in his texts in ways that repeat the particular logic of the unit-based cosmology discussed above. “Harmony” is often stated as the highest virtue cherished by pre-Qin thinkers. Moreover, *Ancient Chinese thought* opens with the argument: “[i]f China's leaders absorb and act on that insight [to build China's rise on the basis of *wang*-style humane authority], they can play a greater role in shaping a peaceful and harmonious world order” (2011: 2). In this way, a rising China can avoid becoming the kind of hegemonic *ba* power that is exemplified

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by the US in the current system. Instead, it can become a new kind of *wang* superpower that relies on leadership through morals and political power. As Linsay Cunningham-Cross sums up what she terms Yan’s “pre-Qin project”: “China’s presence as a new kind of world leader will re-shape world order in a peaceful and harmonious way” (Cunningham-Cross, 2012: 5). In what follows I show how the time-space of this harmonious world order is structured on the pattern outlined above as typical of the unit-based cosmology.

*Spatial units: Inside/outside division*

*Ancient Chinese thought* is marketed as setting out a vision of the coming decades “from China’s point of view” (2011: inside front sleeve). Moreover, throughout all of his analyses, Yan takes the Chinese state as his basic unit, arguing for a particular way of “speeding up” its rise in the inter-state system. He argues that the point of convergence between all the pre-Qin thinkers on whom he draws is their understanding of political power as the foundation of *national* power or strength (2009c: 101). When discussing Hu’s harmonious policies, he also repeats the explicit separation between constructing harmonious society domestically and harmonious world in the international (Yan Xuetong, 2006b: 14—15).

Through his state-centric analysis, Yan’s work takes as its foundation the international state system and focuses on the Chinese state’s rise therein. Moreover, there is a difference between the kind of power that can operate inside a state and that which can possibly operate outside it: “[g]iven the absence of world government, the nature of international leadership is one of authority rather than power” (Yan Xuetong, 2011: 64). Internal national power can therefore be won by military means, as opposed to the power to rule the world, or *Tianxia*, which cannot be won by brute force (Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin, 2008: 64).

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100 “国内建立和谐社会与国际上建设和谐世界” (Yan Xuetong, 2006b).
Temporal sequence: First inside, then outside

The fact that the Chinese state can rule its internal community by force, however, does not necessarily mean that it should. Rather, Yan repeats the argument seen above that in order for a harmonious world to come about, China must first be internally harmonious. In a wang state, the moral superiority of the leadership will guarantee not only harmony within the state, but will set an example for the world to follow (Yan Xuetong, 2009c: 95). Thus, Yan asserts:

>[f]or China to become a superpower modeled on humane authority, it must first become a model from which other states are willing to learn... As long as China can build itself up as a country worthy of imitation by others, it will then naturally become a humane state (2011: 99).

And again, with explicit reference to harmonious world:

>[i]f the Chinese government cannot establish a society facing harmony under the circumstances of controlled state power, then nobody can believe that it can construct harmonious world policies in the international (Yan Xuetong, 2006b: 15).

This notion of harmony on the inside as a precondition for spreading influence to the outside is attributed to the pre-Qin thinkers, for example in drawing on Mencius to the effect that “[i]f a state is harmonious domestically then its army, even though it be weak, will nonetheless be victorious over strong armies” (Yan Xuetong, 2011: 54).

Again, then, we see the argument for a Chinese “going out” to act as a leader and role model for others to follow. And it is the Chinese rulers that make China’s leading position possible:

the interaction of concepts is initiated by the leader, whereas the lower levels of society imitate the higher. In international society, strong states play the lead in pressing ideas, which then proliferate in weaker states.... Pre-Qin thinkers’ notion of the construction of ideas is from top to bottom, from strong to weak. This has two implications for China’s rise. First, the ideas that China promotes abroad should be ones that it has practiced domestically, if they are to be accepted by the international community.... Second, the ideas that China proposes require that China have a powerful position in that area or else they will not prevail in the international community (Yan Xuetong, 2011: 68).
In this way, once more, we recognise the alignment of spatial difference in a temporal sequence, where a linear movement of harmony flows from China's inside to its outside. China is "ahead" and others are simply behind, because of their inferiority when it comes to moral quality and political strength.

*Telos: Harmony as compliance*

Yan is a nationalist, positing a nationalist endpoint to the temporal flow he describes, in the form of Chinese super-power status. His writing is directed towards “the great undertaking of China’s rise” (Yan Xuetong, 2009b) or “The Goal of the Strategy of China’s Rise” (Yan Xuetong, 2011: 99). Yan argues that “[i]f we can rediscover more interstate political ideas of ancient Chinese philosophers and use them to enrich contemporary international relations theory, this will provide the guideline for a strategy for China’s rise” (2011: 106). Moreover, the order that China should advocate is one of compliance and submission in a hierarchical ordering of states. Yan describes that “[a]fter the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, equality of state sovereignty gradually developed to become a universal international norm” (2011: 104). In opposition to this conceptualisation, he argues in favour of a rethinking of international relations on the basis of Xunzi’s interstate philosophy, which he describes as “the exact opposite of equality of sovereignty” (2011: 104). To Yan, it is rather hierarchy that is the key to building a harmonious world, where “norms for an unequal hierarchy” can prevent interstate conflict (2011: 104).

In this way, the harmonious world that is depicted by Yan depends on “voluntary submission” that requires others to become more like the Chinese exemplary self. As Cunningham-Cross explains:

> [f]rom Yan’s narrative then, we see that the world is brought into a new harmonious state when other countries imitate or follow China’s example ... amongst the consequences of Yan’s rising China narrative is a view on ‘Otherness’ that advocates conversion rather than coexistence (Cunningham-Cross, 2012: 12).

What we see, once more, is thus an argument for turning other into self. The model of harmony that he argues China should establish is intended to work as a template for
the rest of the world: “only when a society upholds morality can it be a harmonious society, only then become a model (yangban 样板) for the world” (Yan Xuetong, 2006b: 14). The only difference from the problematic Western conceptualisations is that here it is China that is at the top of the hierarchy. It is simply a question of one “leading state” replacing another:

only when the international community believes that China is a more responsible state than the United States will China be able to replace the United States as the world’s leading state (Yan Xuetong, 2011: 64).

Of course, Yan sees no possibility of installing a harmonious order led by a wang state other than under Chinese leadership. This means that in his ideal world, all states practice submission except for the Chinese state, which will magnanimously rule over its compliant inferiors.

Method: Promoting harmony through hard and/or soft power tools

Finally, in order for a more harmonious world to be brought about, China must actively promote it. As is clear from the passage just quoted, the faith of the international community is a crucial factor in the establishment of a harmonious world. Because of the need for such conversion, Yan argues against the adoption of Laozi’s wuwei (无为, understood as non-action or inaction) because it precludes China from actively shaping world order (Yan Xuetong, 2009b: 163).

In order for a harmonious world under Chinese wang leadership to be possible, “hearts and minds” of these international others must be converted. Yan continues:

[w]hether a state is a responsible major power is not something that the state itself can decide; it is a matter of judgement by other states. Should China increase its material power without at the same time increasing its political power, China will have difficulty being accepted by the international community as a major power that is more responsible than the United States (Yan Xuetong, 2011: 64-5).

A state aspiring to be a wang superpower must thus rely on the political power of attraction. The power Yan wants to promote is his definition of specifically political

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101 See also Cunningham-Cross (2012) for a discussion of this aspect of Yan’s work.
power. Unlike Western notions of “soft power” that conflate cultural and political power, the power that Yan following Xunzi wants to promote derives from the virtuous nature of the leader(s) of that state (Yan Xuetong, 2009b: 154; 2009c: 102). Through its superior morality, the Chinese leadership can thus bring about a harmonious world “through voluntary submission [by others] rather than force” (2008: 159).

It is in this manner that Yan takes his reading of pre-Qin thinkers to shed light on “the construction of China’s theory of harmonious world diplomacy” (Yan Xuetong, 2011: 62):

[w]hat emerges is that a theory of harmonious world diplomacy will have difficulty attaining any great influence on international relations or in acquiring historical vitality unless it presents a universal vision (Yan Xuetong, 2011: 62).

Yan sees a strong “universal nature” in the Confucian idea of such benevolence (and also identifies a “very strong universal potential” in Mao Zedong thought). Ultimately, then, if China wants to build a harmonious world based on concepts that derive from its particular history, it has to convince others of their universal relevance and applicability:

on the one hand, if China’s harmonious world diplomacy can be universalized, then its international influence will be very great. On the other hand, if harmonious world diplomacy proposes ideas on the basis of China’s special characteristics, then it can be used only in China or in a very limited number of other countries. In that case it would have difficulty in attaining international influence and the number of countries that would accept it would be small (Yan Xuetong, 2011: 62).

The account “from China’s point of view” is thus workable only if universalised. As Cunningham-Cross and Callahan have argued, this idea of a new world order directed by the moral leadership of the Chinese political elite may have been more astutely grasped precisely by the term “kingly way”, rather than the “humane authority” of the translated version in Ancient Chinese Thought (Cunningham-Cross and Callahan, 2011: 349)
Having examined in somewhat more detail the work of Yan Xuetong, we can thus see how the tendencies observed in the wider literatures on harmonious world are repeated. Like the other literatures that refer to a unit-based cosmology, his account of a harmonious world under Chinese wang leadership tells a story that organises time and space in an allochronic manner. In this story, the division of space into bounded units is assumed, where inside and outside are dichotomously opposed. A timeline is imagined as running from inside to outside, where China acts as a superior model and forerunner vis-à-vis morally inferior states. China thus leads a temporal movement of harmony that will be established on the inside and then on the outside. The harmonious world that derives from Chinese wang leadership becomes both the means and the end to China’s relation to its outside. This harmonious world is imagined as a hierarchical order of compliance and “voluntary submission” to Chinese leadership, which establishes harmony as opposed to discord. Again, the way to reach this harmonious world order is through the exercise of power that changes others so that they want to become more like China and submit to Chinese rule. Thus, the threat of spatial difference will be managed through aligning such difference in one hierarchical temporal sequence.

A VIEW FROM THE WORLD: HOLISTIC POLITICAL COSMOLOGY AND HARMONIOUS WORLD

The previous section discussed a discursive rendering of space, common in approaches to Chinese IR with close ties to a Western experience of modernity, that some would understand as conquered by time. Today, however, in times that some would call post-modern, we are simultaneously presented with a political cosmology that in many ways contrasts radically with the modernist one. It is said that we, now, have moved on instead to spatial times. This involves an imagination of a world of holistic space, where everything is already connected to everything else.

This imaginary resonates in particular with some discussions of harmonious world that go further than Yan Xuetong in drawing on Chinese pre-modern notions of world order. Dissatisfied with the problematic rendering of difference in the state-centric thinking of what I have called a unit-based cosmology, these thinkers try to imagine a
new world order without bounded units. Instead, they imagine a world without radical self-other distinction, a space without bordered difference, what I call a holistic cosmology.102

Globalised, networked and “unbounded” understandings of China’s harmonious world

To some authors, holism is based in the notion of “harmonism” (hehe zhuyi 和合主义), which one author describes as follows:

in Chinese culture, ‘harmony’ (he 和) has many layers of meaning of ‘kindness’ (heqi 和气), ‘reconciliation’ (hehao 和好), ‘amity’ (hemu 和睦), ‘peace’ (heping 和平), and so on, and ‘unity’ (he 合) also has the many layers of meaning of ‘merging into one’ (heyi 合一), ‘being agreeable’ (heyi 合意), ‘co-operating’ (hezuo 合作) (Zhang Yunling, 2008: 5).

In this combination, a concept of harmony is used that emphasises the “merging into one” or “unification” that leads to a holistic understanding.

To others, the basis of their holistic treatment of world is found in their understanding of an Ohmae-esque globalisation where everything is always already connected to everything else in a borderless world. To Yu Xiaofeng and Wang Jianli, for example, the need to build a harmonious world derives from their particular understanding of globalisation (quanqiu yitihua 全球一体化). This particular way of expressing the term “globalisation” emphasises the global as “one unit” (yi ti 一体), which gives it a different stress than the more common quanqiuhua (全球化). To these authors:

[t]he development of globalisation (quanqiu yitihua) will certainly cause people’s field of vision to change from nation, state or region to the globe (quanqiu 全球), taking the shape of a kind of ‘global identity’ [or ‘whole world identification’ quanqiu rentong 全球认同]…. It demands making people cast off the fetters of nation-centrism (guojia zhongxin lun 国家中心论), representing a theory of humanity holism (renlei zhengti lun 人类整体论) and world-centric harmony theory (shijie zhongxin hexie lun 世界中心和谐论), and then gives prominence to a ‘group ethics’ (leilunli 类伦理) value system…. Only the entirety of humankind (quan renlei 全人类) is the focus and kernel to which we

102 In Chinese, “holism” is usually translated as “zhengti zhuyi” (整体主义), literally “whole-unit-ism”. This terminology resonates in concepts for globalization (quanqiu yitihua 全球一体化) and “humanity holism” (renlei zhengti lun 人类整体论) discussed below.
should pay close attention, only the joint construction of a ‘harmonious world’ is the value objective that we should pursue (Yu Xiaofeng and Wang Jiangli, 2006: 59).

Clearly, here, there is an attempt to break with the state-centrism of the unit-based cosmology, although the explicitly Chinese goal of building a “harmonious world” remains the goal towards which everyone should jointly strive.

This globalised, harmonious whole unit is moreover associated with the new territorial understanding of networked space, “‘network space’ (网络空间) became the new territory” (Ni Shixiong and Qian Xuming, 2008: 124). In this type of holistic rendition of harmonious world, space is imagined without radical other, but rather as one all-inclusive unit where everything is connected to everything else in a networked space.

Within the literatures that draw on Chinese historical concepts, this type of all-inclusive space has come to be associated in particular with the concept of Tianxia. Tianxia, usually translated as “All-under-heaven”, is a concept that is occasionally deployed by Yan Xuetong as well as a number of other authors discussed above, and that was frequently used by the same pre-Qin thinkers that focused on discussions of harmony. It is also taken to express a pre-modern Chinese idea of world order. With the renewed focus on ancient Chinese thought as a source of inspiration for re-thinking world order it has become increasingly popular as the search for a Chinese school of IR theory has gained momentum. It is regularly deployed in the literatures concerned with harmonious world, and a number of scholars stress that harmony calls for such a holistic approach (for example Li Chenyang, 2010: 38).

Yan and others who imagine a harmonious world reliant on a unit-based cosmology refer to Tianxia as an unbounded space, but then use it to perform a traditional analysis based on the state unit. In such accounts, Tianxia is deployed merely as a harmonious inter-state space of bounded units. Others, however, go further in developing a seemingly more boundless idea of Tianxia, which is said to be “completely different from Western civilisation, since Chinese civilisation insists on its own subjectivity, and possesses inclusivity” (Zhou Jianming and Jiao Shixin, 2008: 28).
To Zhou Jianming and Jiao Shixin, in the Tianxia outlook that they associate with harmonious world:

China’s ‘Tianxia’ concept includes everything in the entire world (整个世界的所有), including matter and consciousness. Starting off from the position of Tianxia, China and other countries are all a part of Tianxia, so [the attitude of] ‘nothing outside the mind’ (xinzhong wuwai 心中无外) can consider questions from the holistic interest (zhengti liyi 整体利益) of the world, at the same time as considering its own interest it can also consider the interests of other countries. From the point of view of world outlook this kind of civilisation recognises the multiplicity of civilisations and the pluralism of interests, that is ‘nothing outside Tianxia’ (Tianxia wuwai 天下无外), it also stresses the peaceful coexistence of many kinds of civilisations, shared development, namely ‘working together with one heart’ (和衷共济) (Zhou Jianming and Jiao Shixin, 2008: 28).

Following on such an understanding, Fang Xiaojiao claims that harmonious world builds on a feeling of Tianxia-ism (天下主义), which he takes as:

admitting differences, stressing that different civilisations, states of different development levels, different social systems and ideologies can get along in harmony and peace. This kind of peaceful thought respects multiplicity and difference, it is not the unification of Tianxia (不是一统天下), conceited, but is mutual forgiveness, mutual respect (Fang Xiaojiao, 2008: 70).

Despite this recognition and seeming rejection of Tianxia as a form of holism, however, harmonious world is then said to incorporate the interests of both self and other:

in this sense, the thought embodied in harmonious world expressed a new concept of Chinese diplomacy, it is Chinese traditional culture and universal world value notion, China’s own interest and the other’s interest (中国的自我利益和他者利益), the outcome of combining the goal of harmony and the method of peace (Fang Xiaojiao, 2008: 71).

Similarly, to Li Baojun and Li Zhiyong, Tianxiaism means an identification with all of humankind, where there is no differentiation (tongdeng 同等) or distinction (qubie 区别) between people and no ethno-national classification. Therefore, although there can be a conflict of individuals’ interests there can be no conflict of group interests (Li Baojun and Li Zhiyong, 2008: 82). Spatially, this means seeing the world or Tianxia as
a common political space (公共政治空间) (Li Baojun and Li Zhiyong, 2008: 82).

Therefore, they claim:

only by understanding the world as an inseparable a priori unit (一个不可分的先验单位) can it be possible to see and define a permanent interest belonging to the world (Li Baojun and Li Zhiyong, 2008: 82).

In arguing for such an a priori holistic understanding of harmonious world, this cosmology differs distinctly from the unit-based cosmology.

Zhao Tingyang: Tianxia (天下) and harmonious world

A thinker whose deployment of the Tianxia concept has been particularly influential is Zhao Tingyang, who proposes the concept as a Chinese and better way of imagining world order (2005; 2006b).103 Zhao is one of the few thinkers who have taken the purported “unbounded” imagination of Tianxia seriously. He criticises the state-system for being Western-centric and would reject a notion of Tianxia that was advocated “from China’s point of view”. Instead, he argues that Tianxia can offer “a view from nowhere” or a view “from the world” (Zhao Tingyang, 2003). Zhao’s 2005 book The Tianxia system (天下体系) put his worldview on the global academic agenda (Callahan, 2008).

There are some initial indications that Zhao’s proposed worldview may accord well with the notion of coeval multiplicities. Importantly, Zhao argues that his “political conception could find a strong argument in Chinese ontology, the ontology of relations, instead of the western ontology of things” (2006b: 33). Throughout his discussions of Tianxia, Zhao plays with the definition of this ancient and often vague term, sometimes reading it as “the World”, and at other times understanding it as “Empire”, but always as a political cosmology which explicitly tries to break with the problematic self-other relations of discourses of modernity in general and that of the nation-state system in particular (2006b: 31).

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103 Again, better here means better than the “Western” inter-state system and the idea of an anarchic system, to which Tianxia is portrayed as the good opposite (for another example of such an argument, see Li Baojun and Li Zhiyong, 2008: 81).
Writing about the harmonious world concept and policy, Zhao stresses that the concept derives from he (和), which he, like other scholars discussed above, claims has always been treasured by China (2006a: 1). In his interpretation of harmonious world, Zhao emphasises he (和, harmony) over tong (同, sameness or unity):

in the Spring and Autumn period there was a dispute of rich academic significance concerning harmony, which in contemporary academic language can be expressed as: given that the world is in a state of existing difference (差异), and difference can take the form of conflict (冲突), there are at least two kinds of schemes of resolution (jiejue fang'an 解方案), one is 'unity' (tong 同), that is the unification (tongyi 统一) of value systems and ideologies. This scheme is unworkable, because 'unity cannot endure' (tongzebu ji 同则不继). The other kind is 'harmony' (he 和), that is establishing maximised mutual benefit of mutual coordination in the midst of difference (Zhao Tingyang, 2006a: 1).

From this passage, it is clear that Zhao shares my concern with acknowledging and accommodating difference, and that he wants to prioritise it over unity.

Key to Zhao’s criticism of the state system is that “[s]uch projects have essential difficulties in reaching the real integrality of the world ... due to the lack of a vision of world-ness” (Zhao Tingyang, 2006b: 33). In contrast to the unit-based cosmology, “[w]orld-ness cannot be reduced to internationality, for it is of the wholeness or totality rather than the between-ness” (Zhao Tingyang, 2006b: 39). This worldview is an image of wholeness, integrality and connection: “All-under-Heaven presupposes the Oneness of the world ... Oneness of the world is also reflected in the political principle of ‘inclusion of all’ in All-under-Heaven” (Zhao Tingyang, 2006b: 37). In this way, the imagined space is all-inclusive.

Could this, then, be a relational space of coeval multiplicities? Any such possibility seems doomed as an effect of Zhao’s insistence that “any inconsistency or contradiction in the system will be a disaster”:

[i]n a very Chinese way, politics aims at a good society of peaceful ‘order’ (治), which is the first condition for any possible happiness of each and all, and at keeping a society from the ‘disorder’ (乱) that destroys all possibilities of individual happiness (Zhao Tingyang, 2006b: 33).
As a result of this prioritisation, Zhao comes to insist on the *homogeneity* of his all-inclusive space, where “all political levels ... should be essentially homogenous or homological so as to create a harmonious system” (2006b: 33). Similarly:

[t]he world’s effective political order must progress from All-under-Heaven, to state, to families, so as to ensure universal *consistency and transitivity* in political life, or the *uniformity of society* (Zhao Tingyang, 2006b: 33, emphasis in original).

The aim of the *Tianxia* system is thus to achieve one single homogeneous and uniform space. Clearly, for such homogeneity to be born from a heterogeneous world, someone must change. Zhao argues that:

one of the principles of Chinese political philosophy is said ‘to turn the enemy into a friend’, and it would lose its meaning if it were not to remove conflicts and pacify social problems – in a word, to ‘transform’ (ɪç) the bad into the good (Zhao Tingyang, 2006b: 34).

This idea of transforming the bad into the good in order to achieve *Tianxia* and a harmonious world is particularly important because it has been influential with other scholars using the *Tianxia* concept to imagine a harmonious world (for example Li Baojun and Li Zhiyong, 2008: 84). Moreover, this conversion to a single “good” homogeneity should not happen through expansive colonialism, according to Zhao, but through “volontariness”: “an empire of All-under-Heaven could only be an exemplar passively in situ, rather than positively become missionary” (Zhao Tingyang, 2006b: 36, emphasis in original).

However, when we are given clues as to how this idea of the “good” (to which everyone should conform) would be determined, Zhao’s idea of self-other relations becomes ever more problematic from the point of view of coeval multiplicities. His argument that “[t]o see the world from its world-ness is different from seeing it from part of it” seems to rely on the possibility of some Archimedean point from which to judge this good, and/or the complete eradication of any otherness, so that the one space that exists is completely the space of self (Zhao Tingyang, 2006b: 33). Moreover, Zhao confesses that “[t]he unspoken theory is that most people do not really know
what is best for them, but that the elite do, so the elite ought genuinely to decide for
the people” (2006b: 32). As explained by Callahan:

By thinking through the world with a view from everywhere, Zhao argues that
we can have a ‘complete and perfect’ understanding of problems and solutions
that is ‘all-inclusive’. With this all-inclusive notion of Tianxia, there is literally
‘no outside’ (wuwai – 无外). Since all places and all problems are domestic, Zhao says that ‘this model guarantees the a priori completeness of the world’
(Callahan, 2007: 7).

This “complete and perfect” understanding is hence attainable only to an elite, who
will achieve homogeneity (convert others into self) through example. Eventually, then,
there will be no other, the “many” will have been transformed into “the one”, and to
Zhao only then will there be a “world” at all (Zhao Tingyang, 2005: 13, see also
2006b).

However, as pointed out by Callahan, when Zhao says that the benefit of such a
“civilisation/barbarism” interaction in Chinese history (that between the converted
and the converters) was an “objective discussion of the long term advantages and
disadvantages of different cultures” (Zhao Tingyang, 2005, cited in Callahan, 2008:
755), it “certainly sounds like a hierarchy of cultures analogous to modern racism and
the PRC’s current concern with the ‘population quality’ of its ethnic minorities and of
the peoples of the world” (Callahan, 2008: 755).

Finally, Zhao argues for a prioritisation of time over space:

[t]he comprehensive view of the world as All-under-Heaven surely takes the
whole world as a single political system that is much greater and higher than a
single country or nation/state. Consequently, the empire of All-under-Heaven
highlights the problem of time rather than of space, that is, the problem of its
duration rather than of its territory; and it has been apparent in the Chinese
concern for the legitimacy of its dynasties rather than actual territorial
conquest (Zhao Tingyang, 2006b: 34).

Not only does Zhao’s vision of Tianxia conceive of space as one single, interconnected
system. It cannot think time and space properly together, but needs to prioritise one
over the other in its imagination of a harmonious world. Spatial difference becomes
unimportant, subsumed under the singular temporality of his harmonious world.
The idea that harmony can only be achieved by way of extreme unity, the inclusion of all in its system, is not unique to Zhao’s analysis, but is recurring in the wider literatures on harmony. Qin Zhiyong, for example, stresses that “an incomplete harmonious society obviously does not hold up to high standards” (Qin Zhiyong, 2008: 68).

We have thus seen how a number of literatures, including Zhao’s elaboration of *Tianxia*, imagine one holistic system, a single space where everything is already connected to everything else. This conceptualisation thus seems (at a first glance at least) to imagine a relational space, constituted through interactions. However, if “the many” are indeed turned into “the one”, how can interaction or any form of relation be possible? Furthermore, and just as in the unit-based cosmology, (spatial) differences are convened under the sign of temporal sequence. Amongst the “barbarians”, where the values and rule of *Tianxia* are not “yet” accepted, people will soon see the error of their ways and choose to follow the magnanimous brilliance of the all-knowing *Tianxia* elite. The similarity to Yan Xuetong’s account of a harmonious world is marked.

This view of the coherence of space is problematic because it “enables the existence of only one history, one voice, one speaking position” (Massey, 2005: 41-42). In Zhao’s account this voice claims to speak not “from China” (as it does for Yan), but rather “from the world” or “from nowhere”. It leads to an imagination of causal closure, since there are no others, no outside. Everything is already connected to everything else.

**CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I have discussed scholars’ two most common ways of thinking about China in the harmonious world, what I have called a unit-based cosmology and a holistic cosmology. The former conceives of a jigsaw-puzzled world of bounded and mutually exclusive units. The latter conceives instead of a world where everything is already connected to everything else and there is no outside. This narrative refers to a political cosmology that is thus aspatial. The potential differences of trajectories are occluded, the multiplicities of the spatial are denied, and it cannot allow for a distinct
and separate other within its system. I have shown how both these cosmologies, as they are deployed in the literatures that surround “harmonious world”, operate through turning other into self. All spaces are assumed to be following the same, “our”, path. Hence, because space has been marshalled under the sign of time, other places have no space – precisely – to tell different stories, to follow other paths.

Moreover, the aspatial character of these political cosmologies makes impossible the temporal, since the multiplicity of the spatial is its precondition. The homogeneous, uniform and other-less system of Tianxia conceives of space as a seamless coherence. It conveys an image of the essential section of what has been referred to as “a slice through time” (Massey, 2005: 23). In this formulation temporality becomes impossible – “how to pass between a series of self-contained presents?” (Massey, 2005: 76). If this is the imagination which is to replace “Western modernism’s” temporal alignment of places, then it is a move straight through from a billiard-ball world of essentialised places to a claustrophobic holism in which everything everywhere is already connected to everywhere else, where there can be no coeval multiplicities.

In these conceptions of singular progress, temporality itself is not really open. The future is already foretold, inscribed into the story. The temporal convening of space thus reworks the nature of difference. Coexisting heterogeneity is rendered as (reduced to) place in a historical queue. Drawing on Fabian’s critique, a crucial aspect of the manoeuvre is that many students of IR and harmonious world, by placing an other which is observed in a time which is different from “the Time of the observer” (Fabian, 1983: 25), ”sanctioned an ideological process by which relations between the West and its Other [between China and its other, IR and its object] were conceived of not only as difference, but as distance in space and Time” (Fabian, 1983: 147, emphasis in original).

It adds to this sense of hierarchical separation when scholars describe other people, places or civilizations that are physically separate from the projected “us” as behind (whether through bordered separation or relatively distant in a holistic network). The temporal convening of space is hence being used to increase distance and in the
process creates a hierarchy where we do not need to take the difference and otherness of others seriously. These discordant elements are positioned as the excluded other of harmony, its constitutive outside. This greater distancing moreover has the effect of decreasing the actuality (the challenge) of difference. The temporal convening of space refuses to recognise the challenge that space and time could and should present us with: coeval multiplicities.
4 “Harmonious world” at Expo 2010 Shanghai China

We have seen how China’s rise is commonly described in terms of inevitable destiny because of history. Meanwhile, the PRC leadership is strictly managing the imagined form and significance of such a rise. Since 2008 China has placed new focus on using mega events to shape the expectations of domestic and international audiences, and thus to shape the future. Such mega events included the 2008 Olympic games, the 2009 60th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, as well as Expo 2010 Shanghai China.

Expo 2010 was seen as an expression of and tool for the building of harmonious world by Chinese academics (for example Zou Keyuan, 2011: 11). Yan Xuetong’s *Ancient Chinese Thought* was adorned with an image of the Chinese national pavilion at the Expo on its book cover. The Expo was also associated with harmony by the party-state. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao stuck closely to the official articulation of “harmonious world” when he described the Shanghai Expo as:

an encyclopedia lying open on the land and a magnificent painting showcasing the integration and harmony of diverse cultures ... The World Expo is a vivid demonstration of the diversity of human civilizations. The Shanghai Expo has offered a broad stage for inter-cultural exchanges and integration, reminding us that we live in a divers and colorful world (Wen Jiabao, 2010a).

He continued to argue that the Expo had fully demonstrated harmony to be the common aspiration of mankind, and that the Expo was above national, ethnic and religious boundaries. This, to Premier Wen, was why “[i]t is important that countries ... work together to build a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity” (Wen Jiabao, 2010a).

The Expo was made possible by China’s economic rise, but was also part of establishing the story of such a rise as true, and of narrating a future where China rises to be the benevolent leader of a new harmonious world order. In this chapter I examine the way ideas of China’s role as leader of a harmonious world proliferated at Expo 2010. I go about this examination in two parts. In the first part I trace the two cosmologies that I outlined in the academic literatures in the previous chapter, “unit-
based” and “holistic” spatial imaginaries. I continue to argue, now in the context of Expo 2010, that the two cosmologies are not mutually exclusive. I show how they are deployed at the Expo in ways that reinforce one another by ordering spatial difference through teleological time. The two cosmologies are worked out in conjunction with one another at Expo 2010, in ways that support a particular discourse on China and the world, prescriptive of a particular future where China leads a new harmonious world order. Like some of the academic literatures examined in the previous chapter, the Expo worldview portrays itself as “from the world” or “from everywhere”, yet insists on “specifically Chinese” terms and experience, and on the singular China’s Future as the (harmonious) world’s Future. On this view, there is only one Future, and it does not welcome contestation.

Having recognised this effect of harmony at the Expo, I argue in the second part that we need to move beyond the reading of mega events as simple representation and ideology and read it also as simulation and simulacra. Reading the Chinese world fair as a simulacrum of world order can provide different ways of relating “the West” to its “other country” China. I examine this relation through asking what it means to be the fair: Where is the world fair? When is the world fair? Who is the world fair? Reading the world/fair as simulacrum disrupts the fair’s notions of inside and outside, now and then, subject and object to the point where these terms are no longer workable. What we end up with is not the many turning into the one, with the convergence of others into the self. Instead, what remains is a fragmented plethora of truth, not the unreal but the hyper-real. My reading of Expo 2010 as simulacra examines some of the distinctions implied in the *where, when and who* of the world/fair, and shows that we may be better off not taking our distinctions so seriously.

**THE TWO COSMOLOGIES AND HARMONY AT EXPO 2010**

Expo 2010 took place in the tradition of scientific and industrial world fairs following on from the *Great Exhibition of Industries of All Nations* that was held in London in 1851. Expo 2010 has been read in China to symbolise the greatness and international significance of China – indeed, it was the largest, most expensive, and most visited of
its kind (Barboza, 2010; Xinhua, 2010d; 2010e). The 73 million visitors who passed through the Expo in Shanghai during the six months it was officially open as world fair would be even greater if one counted the subsequent visitors attracted to the site’s permanent monuments (the Chinese national pavilion for example has been turned into a permanent museum) and to the online version of Expo 2010, where one’s avatar can stroll through a virtual 3D replica of the site, visit pavilions and partake in numerous exhibitions as well as interact with other visitors.

![Figure 3: Map from online Expo (Source: Expo Shanghai Online, 2010d)](image)

**The two cosmologies at the Expo**

Unit-based spatial imaginaries are immediately obvious at the Expo. Space at the Expo is typically imagined in a modernist manner as a flat surface upon which humans act, as a “stage” or “platform”. As for the unit-based territorialisation of this surface, the Expo site is organised as an imagined state system, divided into bounded continents of national pavilions. At the online Expo, we can take guided tours of pavilions and exhibitions and get a virtual passport in which we can collect visa stamps from the various territories visited.

Likewise, at the Expo visitors, who may never have been abroad and may not own a passport in the outside world, can get a multitude of visa stamps and “play” at being well-travelled. It is an enactment of the world that pretends such international life is
readily available and unrestricted. It draws up borders and barriers in order to let them be crossed, but by no means erased or blurred. Through turning visa collection into a game, border controls appear innocent at the same time as their indisputable “natural existence” between states is reinforced. However, it becomes clear that partaking in this game of “open borders” is conditional. At the Expo, I met a young travel guide, who visited the Expo with 60 tourists from Beijing. While her group went into the Pavilion of Future (subtitled “Dream inspires the future”) and had their pretend passports stamped, she waited ticketless outside, stopped at the border because she did not have the right papers. Simultaneously, the “external” nation-state system echoed in citizenship regimes inside the Expo when producing a “real” passport meant one could jump pavilion queues for the pavilion of the country that had issued it.

This way of conceiving of space in terms of bordered units was marked throughout the Expo. China’s own pavilion of regions was no exception, sub-divided into regional containers of culture – many even look like boxes with essentialised culture exhibited inside, like the virtual version of the Tibetan pavilion below.

Figure 4: "Tibet in the heaven" (Source: Expo Shanghai Online, 2010e)
Although obviously steeped in a unit-based spatial imaginary, these bounded units are also enveloped in the holistic celestial order of one-worldness. The key terms in holistic imaginaries are the “all-encompassing” or “all-inclusive”, that with “no outside” or “no exception”, “network”, and of course “Tianxia”.

The holistic imagination of everything as always already connected to everything else appears in the room in Urbanian Pavilion themed “Connection” (往). This room is based on the “scientific theory called six degrees spatial theory”, which states that no two people are separated by more than 6 relationships (Xu Wei, 2010: 27). On the ceiling a film is projected showing selected people’s movements on a map. Portraits of people appear in circles connected by lines to more and more other people/circles until they form a web or network on the round screen, bringing your mind to the Earth and thus the idea that all people of the world are connected (Xu Wei, 2010: 27). There is no one outside the network. Moreover, this claim is backed up by science, and thus requires no further explanation.

The Pavilion of City Being describes the city as a living being or organism, focusing on the theme of shengming (生命), meaning life, being or bios. The holistic imagination implied in this idea of the city as one body or life is clear from slogans such as “city being multiplies endlessly, held together by superseding cycles” and “the unceasing adjustment between people and city maintains city life harmonious, healthy city life requires our common protection” (Xu Wei, 2010: 40).

The Pavilion of Urban Planet moreover draws on a holistic spatial imaginary to tell us on the “Road of Solutions” how the resolution to the world’s problems can be found: “[t]he seasons change, settlement becomes cities and trading routes develop into a completely networked world … Only with open mind and all-inclusive view can we bring the hope of sustainable growth to our planet Earth” (emphasis added).

These references to the organically connected single organism or body, the web of connections with no outside and the completely networked world with an all inclusive view all provide the basis of a holistic spatial imaginary. Moreover, the comments
above indicate that this holistic imaginary is taken to demand the harmonious balance of all and “our common protection”.

**Classification in time and space**

From the above we see that imaginations of China in the world at the Expo draw on both unit-based and holistic notions of space. This instance shows the two spatial imaginaries coexisting in contemporary China, and so refutes the idea that one would be superseding the other. I next look closer at how they work in tandem at the Expo.

Throughout the Expo, classification of space is marked. We have seen it above in the unit-based form of mapping state units, as well as that of regions as containers of culture. The holistic *Tianxia* concept does not refer to the jigsaw-puzzled space of the unit-based imaginary, but nonetheless classifies and sequentialises through a centre/periphery, civilised/barbarian divide. *Tianxia* ordering is similar to the Expo site centred on the Chinese pavilion.

Similarly, the comparison and contrasting of “East” and “West” is ever present. In a film screened at the *Pavilion of City Being* we are watched from the screen by “the eyes of Eastern people, the eyes of Western people” (Xu Wei, 2010: 49). Likewise, “Pre-show Hall” in the *Pavilion of Footprint* shows “ideal cities” as they have been imagined in the East and in the West. Dreaming of a better future is described as universal, or eternal (永恒), but similarities end there and juxtaposition takes over.

The division of space into civilisational/regional/national units is aligned with division of time into eras, often in its ancient/modern guise. This is where, just as in much academic discourse, we see evidence of the alignment of dichotomized here/there, modern/ancient and subject/object (cf. Fabian, 1983). As a number of “developing” countries could not fund their own participation in Expo 2010, Chinese subsidies to these countries ensured there were more state and organisation pavilions, 246, than at any previous Expo (Xinhua, 2010e). The vastly different budgets and scales meant pavilions gave the impression of a developmental or aspirational classification, in a visual display of global inequality. As in global development, China financially supported “less-developed” states in a way that
visually emphasised the impressive scale and central location of the Chinese pavilion and reaffirmed China as a “helper” and “developer” ahead of the “helped” and “developing” states at the Expo site periphery, such as the African Joint and Pacific Joint pavilions.

This convening of others differentiated in space through time is crystallised in *Urbanian Pavilion*, which shows the morning rituals of families taken to represent five continents. It shows the similarities of getting up, washing, brushing teeth and so on of people from these different spatial/cultural units. However, the sequentialisation in time is obvious. The man from Rotterdam has an electric toothbrush and the Chinese middleclass office worker wears new pyjamas in his modern bathroom, whereas the bathroom in Rio de Janeiro looks worn and dirty. In this way spatial difference is aligned in temporal sequence. We all do the same thing; it is just that some are a bit behind on the road to Modernisation and Development.

Spatial division is thus not only conceived as classification of space, but also as classification in time. This classification is moreover conceived of in a time that runs towards a particular end. Clock time running out or towards the future is emphasised at the Shanghai train station’s Expo clock tower, as well as throughout the Expo itself by feature clocks, ticking pendula and hourglasses.

The intertwining of temporal notions with strong assertions as to what Chinese identity is in world affairs is clear from an introduction to the Expo on its official website, ringing with familiarity with the official party-line:

> [w]ith a long civilisation, China favours international exchange and loves world peace. China owes its successful bid for the World Exposition in 2010 to the international community’s support for and confidence in its reform and opening-up. The Exposition will be the first registered World Exposition in a developing country, which gives expression to the expectations the world’s people place on China’s future development ... We count on the continuing attention, support and participation of all the peace-loving countries (Expo 2010 Shanghai China, 2008).
In this context, depicting China as original confers on it a status as fore-runner of developing countries, conveniently forgetting the 1949 Haiti Expo (Expo 2010 Shanghai China, 2006a; Bureau International des Expositions, 2011).

China’s present and future direction is frequently depicted in terms of a return to an original or always intended state. The Expo itself is typically portrayed as the fulfilment (led by the PRC/CCP party-state) of an ancient Chinese dream. This portrayal appears in articles (Expo 2010 Shanghai China, 2006b), in books such as 100 years of Expo dream (百年世博梦) (Shanghai shibohui shiwu xietiaoju, 2009), and in the World Expo Museum that looks back at more than 150 years of historical preparation for the Shanghai Expo. Online commentators echo such narratives, and one commentator on the Expo online “Dream Wall” comments that “I believe in China’s actual strength, a country that has 5000 years of civilisation must be able to produce glory once more” (Expo Shanghai Online, 2010c).

Finally, the feature film of the Xinjiang regional pavilion demonstrates how classification of time and space come together into a particular, goal-oriented progress under PRC leadership:

[Xinjiang is] the communication land of four great civilisations of the world ... It once was the road of bonze Xuanzang, the silk road, the road of western expedition and the road of eastern return ... The great transformation of 60 years is the evidence of our diligence and intelligence ... Today, the assistance from the motherland also lights up the passion in Xinjiang (Expo Shanghai Online, 2010g).104

This quote brings together the numerous elements that make possible the problematic imagination of self-other relations that is under discussion in this thesis. A separation between civilisations is posited. Xinjiang is subsequently conceived of as a place where these separate civilisations meet. Progress is imagined as a return to a state that once was, and that is now returning through Chinese diligence in its (re)civilising mission. One can only wonder at the irony as the motherland’s assistance “lights up the passion” in Xinjiang after the brutal ethnic clashes in the years running up to the Expo (Xinhua, 2009d).

104 Bonze Xuan Zang is a Buddhist sage from Chinese literary classic Journey to the West.
Metaphors of lines, circles, spirals and pendula may be used to describe this temporality, but may be misleading as they change significance in their combined use (cf. Gell, 1992). Analogue clock time, for instance, may be circular if used as for example a toy, but indicates linear time flow when allied with other concepts, such as civilisational progress and development. The point of China’s progress/return (to its rightful place as world leader) is not whether we describe it using the metaphor of the circle or the line. Of key importance is instead the way it operates through a classification of time and space: and there is no doubt as to where we are/should be heading. The point is that these temporalities support each other and lead towards the same ultimate endpoint.

The Future is one where China leads a new harmonious world order

Chinese discussions surrounding the Expo typically conferred on it one central meaning – it was a sign of China’s legitimate rise to world leadership. Wishes for Chinese superiority similarly appeared in the online Vanke Pavilion, the corporate pavilion for a large Chinese property developer. One commentator wished that in 2049 “China is in leading position in the world” (中国处于世界领先) and another exclaimed that by then “China has really changed into a great cultural country, ten thousand countries come to pay tribute!” (万邦来朝)105 (Expo Shanghai Online, 2010f).

A majority of participants in the Expo’s “Dream wall” expressed love for the motherland, the Expo and Shanghai, with one exclaiming, “Go Expo, China is invincible!” (Go Expo 中国无敌) (Expo Shanghai Online, 2010c).

Key to justifying this Chinese world leadership is depicting such a world as “harmonious”, in accordance with the harmonious world discourse. The Expo is steeped in this language of harmony. China’s national pavilion begins with the film “Harmonious China” (hexie Zhongguo 和谐中国) and concludes with telling us “the lotus flowers blossom, symbolising the harmonious and glorious future of Chinese cities” (Expo Shanghai Online, 2010a). The Xinjiang pavilion is labelled “Xinjiang – a

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105 This set formulation is commonly used to indicate great power.
harmonious land”. We go to the Expo on a harmonious train, to visit Harmony Tower, and if we hurt ourselves we can have a band-aid from the harmonious first aid kit.

![Harmonious first aid kit](image)

**Figure 5: Harmonious first aid kit (Source: Astrid Nordin)**

The language of harmony is also prevalent among the wishes of *Vanke Pavilion*. One participant wishes:

2010: A life at ease A peaceful and stable job Wishing the great motherland is increasingly thriving and prosperous My family is increasingly harmonious and happy
2049: There is no war in any corner of the world There is no discrimination Peaceful getting along and also wish that when we reach that time people from every corner of the world can all profoundly understand China (Expo Shanghai Online, 2010f).

We see here a mixing of ideas of harmony with notions of a good personal life, a thriving China, and an image of peacefully connected world citizens who comprehend China. Again, there is an emphasis on making foreigners understand "China". A blurb for *Pavilion of Future’s* harmony sculpture similarly personalizes world harmony: “core concept of traditional Chinese culture: only the harmony of the world and all things constitute the harmony of human’s spirit”. Just as in Zhao’s *Tianxia*, we require the harmony of all things. There can be no outside to the system, or it will fail. All
things must be incorporated. This, the claim is, is a distinctly Chinese idea of world order.

Throughout all of these imaginings of China in the (harmonious) world, the two spatial imaginaries combine in ways that repeat the problems outlined with regards to academic discourse, making difficult the imagination of others as coeval. The unit-based spatial imaginary provides a condition of possibility of Chinese particularism. Throughout the Chinese pavilions at the Expo, China is the very origin of civilisation and of the world – it is where the first fire burnt, the first bird flew, and the superior values of Confucian harmony originated. The holistic spatial imaginary becomes key to imagining the need for spreading this civilisation, and for the Chinese civilising mission we currently observe around the world (Nyíri, 2006). The holistic idea of space is core to construing the rise of China to leadership of a harmonious world as peaceful and beneficial to all. In actuality, there is no outside, everything is always already connected to everything else, and the view of the Chinese party elite is a “view from nowhere”, or a view “from the world”.

Many of these themes are echoed through non-Chinese pavilions at the Expo, including the two spatial imaginaries, the goal-oriented notion of time, East-West juxtaposition and a reliance on blurry notions of civilisation. Notably, many foreign states, organisations and enterprises used the Expo to exhibit their willingness to buy into the Chinese discourse on harmonious world, allowing it prominence of place in the way they name, speak of and write of their own pavilions. “Harmony” in particular is given legitimacy through frequent use in foreign pavilions, such as “Harmonious relations” (Pacific joint pavilion), “Feel the harmony” (Austria), “Harmony of the heart, harmony of the skills” (Japan), and so on. While some academic analyses of Chinese foreign policy argue that the PRC is being “socialised” into values and norms of “international society” (Johnston, 2008), the Expo showed the opposite: “outsiders” competing to be most attentive to and accommodating of China’s purported self-image.

Non-Chinese corporate pavilions too helped reinforce and legitimate this particular version of “harmony” with reference to Chinese history. One example was the pavilion
called "Tianxia yi jia" (天下一家): "Tianxia one family". This pavilion was German multinational Siemens' corporate pavilion, showcasing its technology through the aspirational middle class future of interactive games and wine coolers that will apparently be available to Chinese people in 2015. Entering Siemens' harmonious and commercialised rendition of Tianxia we are photographed. As in a miracle of scientific development our faces appear on a film screen at the exit, manipulated to sing together in harmony with the Expo theme tune. The simulation is explained at a sign at the pavilion entrance:

After scanning and capturing the user's facial features, the image will be recorded and transformed into an avatar allowing users to feel as if they are starring in a pre-programmed movie or video ... How will this technology better our lives? Provides an entertaining experience for people to play a role in a movie or become a "star". Everyone has the chance to stand in the spotlight.

China's Future, in this commercialised version as in its official one, provides the time and space for us all to be stars in the spotlight. It is worth recalling here the organisers' own reading where the Expo took place because of "the international community's support for and confidence in [China's] reform and opening-up", expressing "the expectations the world's people place on China's future development" with China sternly counting on "the continuing attention, support and participation of all the peace-loving countries" (Expo 2010 Shanghai China, 2008). In this version of the Future World we are allowed into the spotlight on the condition that we become avatars that sing simultaneously in one voice to the Chinese melody.

**Foreclosing futures at Expo 2010**

In this part of the chapter I have argued that the holistic and unit-based cosmologies, or spatial imaginaries, were prominent at Expo 2010, aligning classified units of time/space in sequence. They are simultaneously deployed in ways that support a particular discourse on China and the World, prescriptive of a particular future where China leads a new harmonious world order.
World fairs were from the outset an exercise where self/other relations were heavily tinted by imperialism (Rydell, 1984). Today, although the specific selves and others reproduced by the Expo may be somewhat different their fundamental manoeuvre is the same. The articulation of time/space with the narrative of harmony is problematic, again and despite itself, because it marginalises concepts of coeval multiplicities and difference. Others are not properly different, they are just behind. Just like Zhao's *Tianxia*, the Expo worldview portrays itself as “from the world” or “from everywhere”, yet insists on “specifically Chinese” terms and experience. This is reinforced as the Expo shows an already nationalistic domestic audience a China that rightfully rises to the place of world leader and the folly of anyone imagining that such a rise would be less than beneficial to all. This is buttressed by readings of foreign involvement and investment in the Expo as endorsements of the Chinese model for its rise, and is taken as a showcase for how harmonious the world is under Chinese leadership.

The Expo worldview portrays itself as “from the world”, yet insists on the singular China’s Future as the (Harmonious) World’s Future. On this view, there is only one Future, and it does not welcome contestation. I propose that we can refuse scripting our songs in the pre-programmed manner suggested by predominant imaginings at the Expo. It can indeed be possible to meet the challenge of coeval multiplicities that time and space should present us with. In the next section I begin to unsettle the dominant rendition of time, space and China in the world by way of reading it through the work of Jean Baudrillard.

**TAKING BAUDRILLARD TO THE FAIR**

Above, I have examined different ways in which China is imagined as *ahead* in the historical queue that is posited at Expo 2010. However, as explained in the introduction to this thesis, a most common way of imagining China elsewhere in discourse on the country’s relation to the world is as behind, or catching up. This way of understanding China’s role in international politics has its roots in an imagination of Chinese experience as radically different to that of Western modernity – as the
“other country” (Chow, 1991: 81). In recent years a key Chinese strategy for negotiating both its claims to particularism and to being a modern great power has been through the public diplomacy of “mega events”, including Exp 2010. The success of Chinese mega events in altering international opinion is debatable (Manzenreiter, 2010: 29-48). As symbols of a changing Chinese identity and outlook they have nonetheless come to be understood as an important aspect of Chinese “image management” (Xin Xu, 2006; Brownell, 2008; Price and Dayan, 2008). In this section I argue that we need to take the next step and understand China’s mega events not only on the level of representation and ideology, but also on the level of simulation and simulacra. I moreover argue that a consequence of such a reading is that we need to stop imagining China as the “other country”.

Mega event genres came about in Western industrialising capitalist countries engaged in nation building and imperial consolidation of the late 19th century (Rydell, 1984: 8, 236; Roche, 2003: 100). Maurice Roche has connected mega events as a phenomenon to “a temporal world view framed in terms of ‘progress,’ the assumed responsibility to build a diffuse western ‘civilisation,’ and the assumed capacity to do so by actively ‘making history’” (Roche, 2003: 103, see also Roche, 1999: 1-31). He has further suggested “mega-events are potentially memorable because they are a special kind of time-structuring institution in modernity” (Roche, 2003: 102, emphasis in original). Like Roche, I examine how time and modernity are negotiated by a mega event, but rather than looking for this time-shaping capacity in the scale and cyclical occurrence of events I examine one particular event, that is Expo 2010.

World fairs have been described as instrumental in creating the distinction between reality and representation, a dualism that has become central to the way we capture the modern world (Mitchell, 1988; Harvey, 1996). In the remainder of this chapter I

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106 Penelope Harvey has begun the work of reading world fairs as simulacra in *Hybrids of Modernity: Anthropology, the Nation State and the Universal Exhibition* (1996). Recent publications have hinted at the possibility of such a reading of Chinese mega events. Most notably, Price and Dayan’s *Owning the Olympics* takes off in an imaginary of the Beijing Olympics as “spectacle, festival, ritual, and finally as access to truth” and concludes: “Or should we rewrite MacAlloon’s sequence in a style inspired by Baudrillard: ‘spectacle, festival, ritual, and finally… simulacrum?'” (Dayan, 2008: 400). To my knowledge none have followed through with an empirical analysis of what such a reading may look like in the Chinese case.
explore what happens when we read the world fair – symbol of modernity – through the work of Jean Baudrillard – symbol of postmodernity. I suggest that we read Expo 2010 not only as an exercise of nation-building, but as shaping also the imaginary of the world as a holistic unit. Expo 2010 could easily be read as a representation of the world, as mimicry or a fake version of the real world beyond its gates. I read it instead as simulation.

My key claim is that the world fair is everywhere, that in fact the world is a fair, and that this has serious consequences for the study thereof. The reading of the world fair as simulacrum shows how we may be mistaken to imagine Chinese experience as radically other to that of Western modernity, or postmodernity for that matter. It provides a different way of thinking about space, time and subjectivity. Importantly, I argue that Baudrillard, who is often accused of being intellectually uncritical or irresponsible (for example by Norris, 1992), can help us think differently about intellectual strategy in our study of such a simulacral harmonious world fair.

I first outline Baudrillard’s discussions of the simulacrum and use this discussion to interrogate the “being” of the world fair. I argue that the fair is not a fake copy of a “real” world, but that as simulation it marks the breakdown of the distinction of the copy from the original, of the fair from the world. Having asked where the fair is, arguing that fairness is everywhere, anywhere and nowhere, I next ask when the fair is. I show that the fair works through recycling, revival and reuse. I thereafter ask who is the fair through an exploration of what happens to subjectivity in the interactive technologies of the fair. I examine how our simulation as subjects and objects of interactive technologies breaks both of these categories down. I argue that being in the world fair turns us into simulacral avatars, circulated in virtual hyper-reality. I finally conclude through asking how to be fair in such a simulacral world fair. I argue that thinking the world in terms of its simulacral fairness does not need to rob us of intellectual strategy, but that we can draw on Baudrillard to think of theory as challenge.
To be simulacral, or where is the fair?

Let us return to Baudrillard’s claim that the world we live in has passed into the hyper-real, “the generation by models of a real without origin or reality” (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 1). What has been lost, he argues, is metaphysics: “[n]o more mirror of being and appearances, of the real and its concept” (1994 [1981]: 2). Crucially, this is not a question of imitation, duplication or even parody, but of substitution. As a consequence the real will never again have a chance to produce itself, but is replaced by a “hyper-real” where there is no distinction between the real and the imaginary, “leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models and for the simulated generation of differences” (1994 [1981]: 3). What is at stake in Baudrillard’s analysis, then, is the reality principle:

[t]o dissimulate is to pretend not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one doesn’t have. One implies a presence, the other an absence. But it is more complicated than that because simulating is not pretending ...

Therefore, pretending, or dissimulating, leaves the principle of reality intact: the difference is always clear, it is simply masked, whereas simulation threatens the difference between the ‘true’ and the ‘false,’ the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary’ (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 3).

In few places is the question of the real and the imaginary, the true and the false, the original and the fake as pertinent and as sensitive as in contemporary China. The lack of respect in China for copyright is a frequent bone of contention in its foreign relations. Domestic relations have been shaken in recent years by the “tainted milk” scandal, where a number of infants were killed and hundreds of thousands fell ill from ingesting “fake” milk powder containing melamine (Barriaux, 2011). In IR, voices are raised that worry about Westerners underestimating the “China threat” because China may be faking it, “a wolf in sheep’s clothing” (Gang Lin, 2005: 1).

Expo 2010 was a highly controlled space, yet it too had its own associated scandals of fakery. Some suggested that Expo 2010’s mascot, Haibao, was a resurrection of American cartoon character Gumby, dubbing it “The Gumbygate scandal” (V Saxena, 2010). The Chinese national pavilion was exposed to similar allegations of plagiarism, facing claims that it looked a lot like the Japanese pavilion from the 1992 Seville Expo,
and equally similar to the Canadians pavilion at Montreal in 1967. The biggest diplomatic scandal, nonetheless, surrounded the promotional tune Waiting for You which was officially written for Expo 2010, its video featuring all-Chinese superstars like Jackie Chan and Yao Ming. A scandal erupted as it was revealed to bear an uncanny resemblance to Mayo Okamoto’s 1997 Japanese hit Stay the Way You Are. The irony was not lost on foreign commentators, with one commentator noting:

[i]f the Shanghai Expo is the ultimate showcase of an economy roaring to world dominance, then the organizers have selected a theme song that perfectly captures China on the cusp of the 21st century: strident, stirring – and ripped off (Lewis, 2010).

The composer of the fair tune first strongly denied plagiarism allegations. Expo 2010 organisers thereafter suspended all use of the song citing “copyright reasons” and after “a flurry of face-saving efforts” Expo 2010 organisers, without admitting any problematic recycling, asked if they could please use Okamoto’s work. The songwriter, whose practically forgotten tune had suddenly returned to the top of Japanese charts, selflessly acquiesced (Lewis, 2010).

These revelations of scandalous fakery, whether on the low level of song writing or the high level of lethal state violence, are typically understood as a form of resistance. They are taken to reveal the real state of affairs. Some commentators extrapolate fakery to a “Chinese characteristic”, portraying resistance to elite-led fakery as a resistance to power. In a short film on Chinese netizens and state power, blogger Wang Xiaofeng comments on Chinese fakes, with video shots of the Expo interspersed:

China is a country who likes to make fake things. Lying is a virtue (美德) of the Chinese. This is evident in all kind of matters. Statistical numbers are fake (假的) and whatever we create, even the good things, are fake. They [the PRC government] must say that some other countries are worse than China, to make common people (老百姓) think that China is the best place to live in (最好的国家). The existence of mainstream media is based on this process of the never-ending creation of fake. And the government itself is constantly creating this ‘fake’. If you go to remote places in China you discover very shocking realities, people can’t even find something to eat, but you still think this country is a great country. So when you want to know the facts and get information you are actually challenging power. They are afraid of this (Wang Xiaofeng in Marianini and Zdzarski, 2011).
The claim of the denouncers of scandalous fakery is that reality is being masked, and the purpose of denunciation is to reveal this reality through exposing fakery. My claim in the reminder of this chapter, and in this thesis, is that the distinction between the real and the fake of the harmonious world is disappearing in a system of self-referential signs. Through this process:

the whole system becomes weightless, it is no longer itself anything but a gigantic simulacrum – not unreal, but a simulacrum, that is to say never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 5-6).

In this respect, simulation is very different from representation. The way the latter is often used implies an equivalence of the sign and the real – even if it is a utopian equivalence. Simulation, on the contrary:

stems from the Utopia of the principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference. Whereas representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 6).

As outlined in chapter 2, Baudrillard explains this in terms of successive phases of the image that I reiterate here:

[1] it is the reflection of a profound reality ...
[2] it masks and denatures a profound reality ...
[3] it masks the absence of a profound reality ...

The shift “from signs that dissimulate something to signs that dissimulate that there is nothing” is crucial because the real is no longer what it once was. This is the

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107 Problematising the dichotomizing relationship between the sign and the real is, of course, by no means originary with Baudrillard, but has a long and varied tradition from Friedrich Nietzsche (1999 [1872]) to Derrida (1981 [1972]).

108 As explained in chapter 2, we need not read Baudrillard’s successive phases of the image as aligned in linear time. The “era of simulation” (1994 [1981]: 2) need not be understood as temporally fixed or discreet.
significance of simulation, and its key effect is that in place of “the truth” we have a myriad of truths taking the shape of signs of reality and myths of origin (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 6).

Baudrillard uses the example of Disneyland to model the “entangled orders of simulacra” because he sees it primarily as a play of illusions and fantasy (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 12). The adults’ parallel to Disneyland in the contemporary era is the world fair, the most recent, the biggest, the most expensive and the most visited of which, again, was Expo 2010. Like Disneyland, Expo 2010 is built up of fantasm and as one of its feature books announces “100 years of Expo dream” (Shanghai shibohui shiwu xietiaoju, 2009). At the same time, as will be seen in this chapter, Expo 2010 involved truth claims in an explicit way that Disneyland never has, which makes it pertinent to examining both 1st and 2nd phase images and those of the 3rd and 4th phase.

Expo 2010 was constructed as a simulacrum of the world in ways that mix dreams with truth claims (and, as I have argued above, the claims that the dreams are indeed the true dreams of humanity and that these dreams will come true). Just like Disneyland, the Expo is ideological: digest of the Chinese way of life, panegyrical of Chinese values, idealised transposition of a contradictory reality. Nonetheless, the “Chineseness” of Expo 2010 can be overemphasised in a format that is all about recycling. As Penelope Harvey writes:

[i]n many ways the form of the great exhibitions has been maintained despite the changing economic, social and political circumstances. Nation states displayed cultural artefacts and technological expertise in their individual pavilions, seeking to educate and entertain the visiting public. The obligations of the organizers of a fair with universal status are less concerned with the actual bringing together of exhibitors from all over the globe than with enacting a theme that simultaneously promotes the unity of mankind and the uniqueness of individual societies (Harvey, 1996: 35).

The nation state has been the key cultural, political and economic unit through which both IR and world fairs have traditionally told the tale of global community, and Expo

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109 Indeed, this paper, too, works through recycling (of Baudrillard, Harvey, Expo 2010) and intentionally so.
2010 recycles this conceptualisation. As I argue above, the spatial organisation of the Expo sites, in Shanghai and online, is a starkly visual simulacrum of the purported organisation of the international state system. Essentialised culture is encapsulated in the spatial containers that are Expo pavilions, which in turn are encapsulated in continents or regions, which in turn are a subdivision of the neatly bounded and mapped world fair. These mappings are presented as neutral and innocent, helpful and real – some lines on a surface, fair and square (Expo Shanghai Online, 2010d).

This particular model depends on a metaphor of scale by which the international community reproduces the form of its constituent parts: “[b]oth part and whole function as self-contained, coherent, bounded entities which are mutual transformations of each other through simple principles of aggregation and disaggregation” (Harvey, 1996: 50). This imaginary reproduces units that differ from each other, but through a difference that is one of equivalence. Whether we think of these units as natural or culturally constructed, they are defined by precise boundaries in temporal, spatial and cultural terms, they are distinct but equivalent entities. This model of equivalence by difference was highly visible at Expo 2010 as at previous world fairs (Harvey, 1996: 51). The world fair appears as a taxonomisation of equivalent national units with their own pavilion, listing in official guidebooks and dedicated day of cultural display. The official Opening Celebration of Expo 2010 saw the parading of national flags, carried by Chinese youth made up to look as repetitions and copies of each other (CCTV Documentary, 2010).

In this way Expo 2010 recycled the form of Expo 1992 in Seville on which Harvey writes:

> [t]he Expo provided a concrete instance of endless replication, a cultural artefact built as if to demonstrate the possibilities and limitations of an entirely consumerist world. Thus there was the appearance of choice, of multiple perspectives, yet the cultural forms on show were nevertheless clearly reformulations and repetitions of each other and of previous events. Sameness and familiarity undermined the promise of difference (Harvey, 1996).
What we learn from Baudrillard is that this second phase ideology moreover “functions as a cover for a simulation of the third order [or phase]: Disneyland exists in order to hide that it is the ‘real’ country, all of ‘real’ America that is Disneyland” (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 12). The world fair, in this vein, exists in order to hide that it is the “real” world, all of the “real” world that is the fair. The presentation of the Expo world as imaginary and as a dream functions to make us think that the rest is real. The world fair takes us further than Disneyland does, as it is not content with a country, but must simulate the world – always striving to be more inclusive, with Expo 2010 priding itself on including pavilions of more countries than ever before, an inclusion which cost the PRC government large sums in the form of subsidies (Xinhua, 2010e). In this way Expo 2010 marks a shift from ideological nation-building to worlding by simulation. Shanghai, China and the world that surround the Expo are no longer real, but hyper-real, belonging now to the order of simulation: “[i]t is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle” (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 12-13).

The relation between Baudrillard’s different phases or orders – those that dissipulate something and those that dissipulate that there is nothing – comes to the fore in the hyper-awareness and self-reflexivity of Expo 2010, as it had begun to do in previous world fairs (Harvey, 1996). There were frequent references to the self-representations of previous world fairs, in TV programs, books and in the “Expo museum” at Expo 2010 (see for example Shanghai shibohui shiwu xietiaoju, 2009). In many instances of its replication, the world fair reflected on itself as the exhibition of the exhibition of the exhibition without end, as world fair exhibiting world fair. Key emblems, monuments and mascots of previous fairs were brought together with the effect of appearing as self-referential signs, as copies of copies, representations of representations without original, signifiers of signifiers without signifieds, ad infinitum. In this way:

[t]he exhibition represents the world, provides contexts and connections for an understanding of external realities, but its reflexivity simultaneously
confuses or confounds the distinction of insider/outsider, representation and reality” (Harvey, 1996: 37).

The implication is one of implosion of the careful construct and of moving to the fourth phase: “it has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum” (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 6). Therefore, we must take the step beyond understanding how the exhibition represents the world and grapple with how the harmonious exhibition is the world, and the harmonious world the exhibition.

Reading the Expo through Baudrillard thus turns the world into fair and the fair into the world. As I will continue to show throughout this chapter, the distinction between one as real or original and the other as fake or copy can no longer be upheld. All we have are versions or layers of the harmonious world/fair, all simulacra. This is why I argue with this chapter that we need to take the step and study it as such, rather than limit ourselves to reading China’s mega events purely on the level of representation and ideology, upholding the reality principle. The layers of simulacra are all world/fair, but cannot be the fair in a fully present way because Baudrillard, and others with him, have upset the dichotomisation of presence and absence. For this reason, the relation between the layers of simulacra is not that of a coherent system, of stable exchange or of dialectics. The world/fair is simultaneously nowhere and now here.

To be recycled, or when is the fair?

I have asked in the previous section where the fair is and argued that “fairness” is everywhere and anywhere – that the world/fair is simultaneously nowhere and now here. I turn next to the temporality of simulacra in this formulation to ask when the fair is. Looking for the world/fair somewhere and sometime beyond the dichotomisation of presence and absence I argue that the fair works through recycling, revival and reuse, that as a rem(a)inder, it is not new.

What better place to start than with beginnings and origins? “We require a visible past, a visible continuum, a visible myth of origin, which reassures us about our end.

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110 This problematique has been discussed among others by Jean-Luc Nancy (1991 [1983]), Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1988 [1980]) and Derrida (1976 [1967]).
Because finally we have never believed in them” (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 10).

Beginnings were certainly important to displays of China at Expo 2010. Throughout the Chinese national pavilion and dozens of Chinese regional pavilions, China is described as the origin of the world, echoing wider media and academic discourse in China. Various Chinese regional pavilions also pride China for figuring as the origin of (Chinese) civilisation. I use brackets here because there is some discrepancy or ambiguity in terms of communicating such messages to Chinese speaking and English speaking audiences. In the Gansu province case, for example, which circles around its “long history” of more than 8000 years of civilisation, a sign that reads in English “Dadiwan Site in Qin’an County Believed to Start the Chinese Civilization” in Chinese language simply reads “Civilization begins – Qin’an Dadiwan” (文明肇端). This kind of slippage between these terms appears throughout Expo 2010 and makes Chinese civilisation appear coterminous with civilisation as such.

This exhuming of “Chinese civilisation” functioned as a cover for a simulation of the second phase, as an ideological tool that served to make the “5000 years of uninterrupted Chinese civilisation” appear real. This uninterrupted history of harmony is part of the shift in legitimisation of CCP rule from socialism to nationalism and “Chinese characteristics” (Cheung, 2012; Billioud, 2011). Most importantly, however, this exhumation took pride of place because of a dream, “behind this defunct power that it tries to annex, of an order that would have had nothing to do with it, and it dreams of it because it exterminated it by exhuming it as its own past” (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 10). IR scholars are performing this same exhuming ritual when we dream of the emerging “Chinese school” of IR theory as a radical alternative to “the West”.

The fascination with this Chinese school resembles that which Baudrillard describes of Renaissance Christians with American Indians. At the beginning of the Christian colonising movement existed an instance of bewilderment at “the very possibility of escaping the universal law of the Gospel” (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 10). In this

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111 This “West”, on my understanding, is not real in the first place and the breakdown of any hard line between inside and outside makes such radical dichotomization fall apart.
bewilderment we could either admit to the lack of universality of the Law, or exterminate the evidence to the contrary. The conversion or simple discovery of these different beings is usually enough, for the Renaissance Christians as for scholars of IR, to slowly exterminate them.

This tactic of discovery and conversion as a form of violent extermination of others has been acknowledged elsewhere in IR scholarship (Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004) and it remains a tactic in PRC policy towards its “internal others” in areas like Tibet and Xinjiang.\textsuperscript{112} Chinese policy towards its ethnic minorities is presented as proof of the superiority of Chinese civilisation: it produces \textit{more} ethnics than the ethnics themselves were able to do – since the PRC state provides modern healthcare and “scientific development” and exempts ethnic minorities from the one child policy. Moreover the PRC state produces \textit{more ethnic} ethnics than they themselves had mustered. This promotion of Chinese ethnic minorities through their regional pavilions lies at the heart of Expo 2010, a base from which the Chinese national pavilion rises. Everywhere, the ethnic is exotically reproduced, recycled and rescreened. Everywhere happy, colourful and anachronistic “ethnics” sing, dance and rejoice in the greatness of the motherland, as in the Xinjiang pavilion (“a harmonious place”). This overproduction is a means of destruction, a “promotion” and “rescue” which forms another step to their symbolic extermination.

Nonetheless, the Expo is highly self-aware in its use of time. As described above, it frequently uses clocks, hourglasses and pendula to mark the countdown to horror scenarios of planetary destruction in order to drum home its purported message of “Better city, Better life”. In places it moreover explicitly favours “recycling” over “linearity”.

\textsuperscript{112} This is particularly the case in current PRC policy towards the Western “Autonomous Regions” of Tibet and Xinjiang where “splittism” is considered a challenge to the integrity of the PRC state (Barabantseva, 2011).
The theme pavilion *City being* uses similar metaphors to Baudrillard to conceive of time, that of biological life cycles, metabolism, circulation and recycling. These are said to be key to the proper functioning of the system. This pavilion is evocatively constructed as a sewerage system interspersed with circulating billboard messages of interconnection. It is explicit about its rejection of linear models, as in a pair of diagrammatical signs of which the first reads “A linear model will result in excessive pollution and waste”, and the second reads “A cyclical model will feature greater recycling and less waste”.

Figure 6: “A linear model will result in excessive pollution and waste”  
(Source: Astrid Nordin)
In this way Expo 2010, like Baudrillard, engages directly with claims to the end of history:

> [h]istory will not come to an end – since the leftovers, all the leftovers – the Church, communism, ethnic groups, conflicts, ideologies – are indefinitely recyclable ... History has only wrenched itself from cyclical time to fall into the order of the recyclable (Coulter, 2004).

Through these examples we can see the world/fair engaged in different phases of simulation, which can be understood as dissimulating something, but also as dissimulating that there is nothing. In places, the world/fair appears unreflexive, as attempting to reinstate the reality of its teleological progress. In other aspects, however, its reflexive hyper-aware recycling seems to show how “it has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum” (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 6). Not only, then, can the world no longer be represented by the fair, but more importantly it can no longer be fairly re-presented, it can no longer be made present in time and space as some full or complete presence. As such, it is not enough to remain within a simple framework of representation and ideology in our analyses thereof, but we need to take the next step and start analyzing China’s mega events also
as simulacra. The world/fair is simultaneously nowhere and now here. The world/fair is recycled.

**To be screened, or who is the fair?**

Having asked in previous sections *where* and *when* the fair is I turn to the question of *who* is the fair. What happens to subjectivity in the interactive technologies of the world/fair? I argue that in an order of recycling, the technologies that make us simultaneously subjects and objects make the distinction between subject and object untenable with the effect of making these categories unworkable.

It is clear that our embodiment matters in the world fair as it differentiates between ways of being in the world/fair along lines of class, race, gender and so on. At the Shanghai Expo, where well over 90% of visitors were Chinese, the ability to identify me as a fair-skinned visitor from the outside made me an immediate part of the exhibited exotica (my being fair made me the fair, so to speak. And simultaneously the reverse was true, my fairness positioned me as though outside the fair, observing it/them). But Expo 2010 goes much further in making us part of the fair, through the layers of interactive technologies by which the fair itself emerges.

In the first instance, we are an active part of this emergence, we can plan, steer and shape the world/fair, we are the subjects of its emergence. Visitors are often asked to actively participate in Expo 2010. Indeed, interactivity is a key feature of many pavilions and different layers of the world/fair, and one pavilion is expressly dedicated to displaying it. Here, photographs from Expo 2010 and its preparation, submitted via the Expo 2010 website, are circulated on screens. Participants can also send “blessings and wishes for Expo 2010” from various websites and have them screened in the pavilion, surrounded by cards with wishes and blessings written by its visitors. In a “wishing tree” we are encouraged to write wishes on colourful paper, fold it into airplanes and throw it into an artificial tree. In parallel, the Online Expo 2010 has many venues where one’s avatar can leave wishes, such as the Vanke pavilion or the Expo dream home discussed above. On a multimedia display stand visitors to Expo 2010 can arrange various building models and simultaneously a 3D image of its layout.
will appear on a background wall, surrounded by previous “excellent works”. In this way, a sign for the multimedia display tells us, “You could become one of the designers of a future city”. In Shanghai’s own pavilion at Expo 2010 the “Shanghai forever” image wall, consisting of revolving triangles and more than 15000 photographs featuring Shanghai, is a product of “mass participation and joint creation” (公众参与，共同创作) intended to expound the “design conception of ‘New horizons forever’” (or in Chinese “Shanghai eternally marches towards a new horizon”, 上海永远迈向新天地). Images of images are everywhere and we can be their creators.

Nonetheless, in subjecting the world/fair to our gaze and our actions, we are simultaneously subjected by it. Our bodies are not only in the world/fair, they are the world fair, as the fair is our bodies, simultaneously watching and watched, displaying and displayed. Often our recognition as participants rests on our willingness to take on specific subject positions – tellingly, the English title of the pavilion for popular participation is “Citizens’ initiative pavilion”, interpellating us as citizens of the mapped state system on display. It is through such citizenship that we are allowed recognition in the world/fair. Indeed, the different layers of simulacra share citizenship regimes as a key feature, invoked through the passport. At previous world fairs, at the Shanghai Expo, and at the online version of Expo 2010 we can have a passport in which we collect “visa stamps” from the pavilions visited.

At points, we have to actively change ourselves to make us acceptable as subjects in order to have our fair share. Passing through the world/fair we are screened and tested. This screening echoes for the subject/object dichotomy (the who) the collapse we saw in previous sections of the here/there (the where) and the now/then (the when). As Richard Lane has observed with regards to Baudrillard:

there is an interpenetration of the screen metaphor with the notion of everything being on the surface here, including the ‘friendly’ surveillance which simultaneously shows the people under surveillance on television screens, which leads to a collapsing of perspectival space (the removal of the ‘gap’ or distance both spatially and temporally between the viewer and the viewed) (Lane, 2000: 42).
Here interpenetration is total, including of architectural and geographical space. The layers of simulacra cannot be separated. All of Expo 2010, the Shanghai Expo and its virtual replica, Shanghai, China, all of the world/fair are indistinguishable “as a total functional screen of activities” (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 76). In this way all of the world/fair operates through screening, in every sense of the word. The example above of the excluded travel guide moreover exemplifies how our participation in the citizenship regimes of the world/fair is conditional – she was stopped at the border because she had not paid the fare.

Indeed, the world/fair is most helpful in persuading us that we can (and should) adjust our selves to pass its screening. In a book dedicated to Expo etiquette prospective visitors to the world/fair are most helpfully taught how to modify their behaviour and their bodies (Xu Bo, 2009). Chinese readers can learn amongst other things how to greet, walk, shake hands, sit, queue and care for their personal hygiene in a polite manner. They can read about how to go to karaoke, drink coffee with foreigners and host them in their home according to global decorum. In an appendix we find a taxonomy of etiquette, outlining customs country by country, from the US to Egypt (2009: 147-71). One drawn image, for example, shows one man (who we can assume, from the big nose in profile, is a Westerner) who sits nicely at his table with one glass and one plate on which he is attacking a square (perhaps a piece of toast) with his knife and fork. He looks with bewilderment and a hint of fear at another man or boy who smiles a big smile as he carries his second plate to the table, where he has already assembled two glasses, various fruits and one more plate overflowing with food (in the mish-mash of which we can identify various fruits, a whole fish, a crab and some shrimp). The picture’s caption instructs its Chinese readers the civilised manner of partaking of the fare of the fair through a rhyming slogan: “big eyes, small stomach, cannot finish the delicious fare” (yan da zuzi xiao, meiwei chi bu liao 眼大肚子小, 美味吃不了) (2009: 62).

The concluding chapter of the book, on “how to be a refined and well mannered Expo person”, clearly conceives of such politeness in terms of the return to an original state. We are encouraged to “utilize the Shanghai Expo as a historical turning point, to make
every one of us change into politely speaking Expo people” and after being told about “the Expo’s demand on the etiquette of the people of the host country” to “through the Expo make elegant etiquette return to China” (2009: 141-6, emphasis added). Thus, being a civilised citizen of the world/fair is not about being more like somebody else, but about being more like your self; it is a question of recycling.

At other points, moving through the world/fair our bodies are more explicitly hijacked by screening, made to do things potentially against our will (and indeed through or in advance thereof), proliferated, taken apart. The Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region case for example shows visitors’ images captured and repeatedly displayed on screens. As citizens of the world/fair our bodies are captured and displayed as copy upon copy throughout Expo 2010, media and academic work, including this thesis.

![Figure 8: Screened in Ningxia autonomous region case (Source: Astrid Nordin)](image)

This hijacking technology is not simply in the hands of states. Siemens powerfully commoditised Chinese cultural heritage and the Chinese national modernisation project in its Tianxia yi jia pavilion discussed above. To English language audiences the pavilion was marketed through the name We are the world, a name which aptly brings out the recycling nature of the fair through reviving Michael Jackson’s old hit
song, but which also showcases the ambiguity of the question “who is the world/fair”. The “we” is ambiguous and inside the pavilion the capacity in which “we” become the world/fair is telling – as described above, our faces pass through a computer program and are recycled on screen as avatars, transformed, singing along with the Expo 2010 theme tune. Our avatars in the virtual version of Expo 2010 are, to some extent at least, a consequence of our volition and choice, albeit screened and monitored with a mandatory Chinese ID number registration. In Siemens’ corporate version of “All-under-heaven” we are the world/fair without being told in what our stardom will consist. Our avatars are exposed as pre-programmed, as playing a pre-scribed role, and this play has only one script, one where we all sing along with the Chinese tune. From these examples we can see two kinds of technologies operating in the world/fair: ones that represent the world and ones that operate through simulation, “provoking a reflexive awareness of artificiality and simulacra”:

[t]he first of these conceives of technology as enabler, and is the concept that lies behind the notion of the Expo as a technology of nationhood. Technology enables a perspective that can produce wholeness from fragmentation. Expo enables the appearance of the world as a whole, through the revelation of the fragments that are cut from it and the apparent celebration of their differences (Harvey, 1996: 123).

Expo 2010’s use of interactive technologies moved away from “representations” of the world as we know it to be. It celebrated instead the possibility of producing a simulated world, copies of copies (dis)interested in an original:

a world of images more real than the real, a fascination with the hyper-real, pretensions to realities that were never there in the first place or at least not in such perfect form, concrete manifestations of abstract possibilities [that] produce the essence of life itself as outcome not origin (Harvey, 1996: 123).

The examples discussed here reaffirm a rather sinister side to simulation: “[w]e are living through a movement from an organic, industrial society to a polymorphous, information system – from all work to all play, a deadly game” (Haraway, 1991: 161). Through these technologies of the world/fair, not only our concepts of spatiality and temporality, but also our notions of subject and object, are displaced. Being in a
simulacral world/fair is simulacral being. As such, we need to move beyond analyses of Chinese “mega events” through concepts of simple representation and reality, and work to understand how they operate through simulation and simulacra. We are copies of copies without original, simulacral avatars in virtual hyper-reality. The Expo is us: our bodies, our dreams, our future.

**To be tactical, or how to be fair?**

In this chapter I have asked what it means to be fair. I have argued that the fair is not a fake copy of a “real” world, but that as simulation it marks the breakdown of the distinctions of the copy from the original, of the fair from the world. The world/fair is everything and nothing, simultaneously nowhere and now here. I have shown that the world/fair works through recycling, revival and reuse that, as a rem(a)inder, is not new. I have further argued that being in the world fair turns us all into simulacral avatars without original, circulated in virtual hyper-reality. All these claims have serious consequences for the study of China in the harmonious world.

My reading here shows the problem of thinking of China as the “other country” (Chow, 1991). Baudrillardean simulacra have come to symbolise postmodernity, continental philosophy, late capitalism and an American way of life. All of these terms imply a *where, when and who*. A key finding of this chapter is that the implied answers to those questions are not as straightforward as may at first glance appear.

Reading Expo 2010 as simulacra shows that we cannot locate “China” as an other, in another place and another time than that of our purported late capitalism or postmodern condition. Importantly, though, through Baudrillard’s simulacra we can see how this is not a case of “catching up”, of those behind (finally) becoming like us. The point is not that “the others” have now become “the same”, so that we can happily apply our “Western theories” and ignore difference. The point is, rather, that reading the world/fair as simulation messes with its notions of inside and outside, now and then, subject and object to the point were these terms are no longer workable. What we end up with is not the many turning into the one, with the convergence of others into the self. Instead, what remains is a fragmented plethora of truth, not the unreal
but the hyper-real. The effect is our own disappearance. The object becomes us, sees us. We see ourselves through the harmonious Expo. The harmonious Expo is us. My reading here of Expo 2010 as simulacra has examined some of the distinctions implied in the where, when and who of the world/fair. We need to make such distinctions, but given that they do not hold up, we might open up more space for different politics if we were to not take our distinctions so seriously.

But of course the study of the harmonious world/fair is serious. We all want to base our work on fair ground, but what happens to fair descriptions when that ground has turned out to be a fairground? To return to the discussions in chapter 1: in the simulacral world/fair, can we still retain strategy?

Already in his earlier work, Baudrillard had come to the conclusion that in a “hyperrealist” system, “[s]trictly speaking, nothing remains for us to base anything on” (Baudrillard, 1993 [1976]: 4-5). In a hyper-real world of simulacra, the weight of information makes modernity (and its space) fall apart. This has shattering implications for meaning: “where we think that information produces meaning, the opposite occurs” (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 80). Meaning, truth and the real are reversed, that is, they are divested of any universal meaning, which restricts them to local, partial objects (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 180). In this age of simulation we have surpassed old versions of uncertainty and made our problem permanent (Baudrillard, 2002 [1997]: 90). Recycling and simulation, with what they do to reality, to time and space, demand something from us: we no longer have the choice of advancing, of persevering in the present destruction, or of retreating – but only of facing up to this radical illusion (Baudrillard, 1994 [1992]: 122-3).

In this manner, the uncertainty of the simulated world/fair is not necessarily a cause for pessimism. Coulter has claimed:

Baudrillard has long found a radically uncertain and ultimately unknowable world a far more comfortable place to live than one which is predictable. Baudrillard lives, as well as do [sic], in a world in a permanent state of reversibility, and he prefers it to a world that is accomplished (Coulter, 2004).113

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113 My reading of Baudrillard in this last section owes much to Coulter’s reading.
I agree with Coulter's sentiment, but think we are better off thinking of Baudrillard's (and our) being in this recycled world as profoundly uncomfortable. The question posed is most pertinent to the way we think about the harmonious world and our role in doing it, precisely:

[d]oes the world have to have meaning, then? That is the real problem. If we could accept this meaninglessness of the world, then we could play with forms, appearances and our impulses, without worrying about their ultimate destination ... Do we absolutely have to choose between meaning and non-meaning? But the point is precisely that we do not want to. The absence of meaning is no doubt intolerable, but it would be just as intolerable to see the world assume a definitive meaning (Baudrillard, 2001 [1999]: 128).

This implosion or disappearance of meaning, truth and the real, however, does not mean we cannot have strategy: “[t]heoretical violence, not truth, is the only resource we have left us” (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 163). The strategy Baudrillard has developed is a “fatal strategy”, one that values uncertainty and where, in contrast to banal theory, the subject is no longer under any illusion of being more cunning than the object (Baudrillard, 1990 [1983]: 181). This is the type of strategy I have pursued in my engagement with the Expo and the harmonious world that it simulates. As explained in chapter 1, I pursue a form of theoretical violence against the notion of a harmonious world by tracing its excessive proliferation. This chapter has been part of such an effort.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have traced "harmonious world" through the pavilions, exhibitions, books, visitors, architecture and screens of Expo 2010. I have argued that the “holistic” and “unit-based” cosmologies outlined in the previous chapter appear also to convey the notion of harmonious world at the Expo. I have shown how they are deployed at the Expo in ways that reinforce one another by ordering spatial difference through teleological time, with the effect of disallowing coeval multiplicities and prescribing a particular future where China leads a new harmonious world order. Like the academic literatures examined in the previous chapter, the Expo worldview
portrays itself as “from the world” or “from everywhere”, yet insists on “specifically Chinese” terms and experience, and on the singular China’s Future as the (Harmonious) world’s Future.

I have also argued that we need to move beyond the reading of these types of propaganda events as simple representation and ideology and read it also as simulation and simulacra. Reading the Chinese world fair as a simulacrum of world order can provide different ways of relating “the West” to its “other country” China. Through asking where, when and who the world/fair is, reading it as simulacrum disrupts the fair’s notions of inside and outside, now and then, subject and object to the point where these terms are no longer workable. What we end up with is not the turning of others into sameness, but a fragmented multitude of reality, the hyper-real. Through examining some of the boundaries drawn to delineate the where, when and who of the world/fair, I have argued that we may be better off not taking these so seriously.

In contrast to the teleological narratives on China in the harmonious world – in policy discourse under Hu, in the academic literatures that analyze it, and in the conceptualisations of time and space at Expo 2010 – the world described by Baudrillard is not determined. In this world “everything is antagonistic” rather than harmonious, and good will not necessarily triumph over evil (Baudrillard, 1990 [1983]: 162, 182).

The strategy, then, is not for theory like in Enlightenment thought to reflect the real, but instead to work as a challenge. The world/fair is not compatible with the “real” that is imposed upon it. Importantly though: “the function of theory is certainly not to reconcile it, but on the contrary, to seduce, to wrest things from their condition, to force them into an over-existence which is incompatible with that of the real” (Baudrillard, 1988 [1987]). The purpose then of theory is to s(t)imulate the (im)possible in the world/fair. My aim with this chapter has been to take one step in such a direction and provoke us into thinking of China’s harmonious “mega events” beyond representation, reality and ideology – to think of them in terms of simulacra.
And it is to further challenges to “harmonious world”, to the question of the antagonistic, that I turn to in the next chapter.
5 "Harmonious world" in egao resistance

In previous chapters we have seen how Hu’s “harmonious” policies have come to involve increasing “harmonisation” of critical voices through addressing them in an allochronic manner. In this chapter I explore some of the creative forms of discursive resistance that have grown in popularity as a way of simultaneously avoiding and criticising such harmonisation. The data on which I build my analysis consists of blog entries, images, songs, videos and news reports enmeshed in the negotiation of the meaning of “harmony”. I examine instances of what may be called a “deconstructive close reading” of the harmony character, an iterative and playful practice. I argue that this playful reading of the harmony concept can work to expose some of the discursive exclusions and violences of Hu’s harmonious world, whilst simultaneously opening the term up to readings that can be more conducive to thinking “coeval multiplicities”.

In the first section I outline how Chinese “netizens” have appropriated the language of harmony to resist harmonisation. I trace these iterations in order to bring back in elements denied by Hu’s harmony, significantly the question of difference and competition implied in the question: whose harmony? I show through the “deconstructive close reading” of harmony how the purported meaning of the term always already incorporated the seed of its own undoing. Throughout this reading, I explore how it may relate to Derrida’s reading of deconstruction. In the second section I continue to draw on Derrida and Baudrillard to read this resistance as cancer or (auto)immune disease. I argue that it is the “harmonious” system’s attempt to purge itself from “unhealthy elements” that in fact produces the “cancer” that threatens it. In the third section, I argue that reading Derrida alongside Baudrillard’s analysis of cancer and metastases can help us understand it in a way that allows for the

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114 Chinese "netizens" (网友), or online activists, are increasingly understood as a force of change in Chinese society and politics. Studies of Chinese online discourse has tended to focus on online nationalism and xenophobia (Qiu, 2006). Recently, however, scholars have shown how, since the mid-1990s, the Internet has revolutionized popular expression and provided unprecedented means for users to organize, protest, influence public opinion and even bring down corrupt officials, at least at a local level. Some argue that these netizens are laying the groundwork for the eventual realization of "institutionalized democracy" (Yang Guobin, 2009), although others argue that there is no strong evidence to date of such development (Shen and Breslin, 2010: 264).
“heterotemporalities” in the fragmented present that we saw Hutchings calling for in chapter 2, and thus as a step towards thinking differently about “coeval multiplicities”.

ITERATION AND LANGUAGE PLAY: RESISTING HARMONISATION

Previous chapters of this thesis have examined how the Chinese discourse on “harmony” operates by way of exclusion of discord, and through the violent spatio-temporal double-act of inclusion into sameness and exclusion as “behind”. If such attempts at harmonisation of others have been traced in various times and spaces, this is not to imply that they are not crucially linked to the sovereign power of the policy discourse, by way of which we began the exploration of harmony in this thesis: Hu’s harmony. This version of harmony has bordered its national space in many ways, including by the insistence on territorial sovereignty so closely associated with Hu’s “harmonious world” policy. This insistence on sovereignty and non-interference has been deployed precisely to legitimate in the international arena the various forms of harmonisation that have come to be associated with harmonious world’s policy twin, “harmonious society”.

Being harmonised online

One key tactic employed by the state for containing dissidence and making resistance more difficult has been through harmonising expression on the Internet. Where some may initially have imagined the Internet to provide the space for near-unlimited freedom of expression and provide a tool to hold government accountable, more empirical studies soon resulted in more sober analyses (Chase and Mulvenon, 2002; Kurlantzick, 2004; Lagerkvist, 2005).

On the one hand, the state has been active in trying to include the public through e-governance and “guidance” (指导), and by shaping opinion through overt or covert propaganda online (Lagerkvist, 2005: 206). Officials have portrayed the implementation of information and communications technologies in police and security organs as a “necessary strategic choice”, echoing Hu’s view of the future in terms of an “inevitable choice” (Minister of Public Security, Jia Chunwang, in Huiliang

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zhoukan, 2002, cited in Lagerkvist, 2005). One example of such propaganda is the anonymous participation in online fora by what netizens call the “50 cent party”, individuals paid to tow the party line and steer online discussion so as to be favourable to the party. Another example is the increasing amount of what Johan Lagerkvist has called “ideotainment”. This term denotes “the juxtaposition of images, symbolic representations, and sounds of popular Web and mobile phone culture together with both subtle and overt ideological constructs and nationalistic propaganda”, which may be exemplified by the Online Expo examined in the previous chapter (Lagerkvist, 2008: 121). The desired outcome of such e-governance, according to Lagerkvist, is “installing a machine” that can provide “‘scientific and correct’ knowledge among citizens and state officials” (2005: 197). The success of the state in achieving the goals of its inclusionary “thought work” (思想工作) nonetheless remains questionable (Lynch, 1999).

On the other hand, the state has been simultaneously active in trying to exclude the public, through deleting posts and blocking the Internet. Border regions like Xinjiang have been without Internet access for long periods as a way to hinder communication and spread of information about the work of their “harmony makers” and to pre-empt the spread of “splittism”. A parallel strategy deployed to keep the flow of information harmonious and pure throughout China has been to surround Chinese virtual space by a “Great Firewall”, a programme that blocks many sites based outside China from being accessed from within China (including Google+, Facebook, Twitter and other social media), and to simultaneously demand extensive policing and censorship of sites located “inside” this walled space. An important part of this exclusionary censorship practice has been the widespread blocking of specific words in online communication. A message that includes one of the thousands of characters that at any particular moment is deemed “sensitive” can be instantly deleted by censorship software. The line between acceptable and unacceptable expression remains elusive and shifting (Breslin and Shen, 2010: 266). In drawing it, however, explanatory emphasis is on a language of “health”, with censorship purported to

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115 The blackouts were noted in the Western mainstream press (Blanchard, 2009; AFP, 2011). For a fuller explanation of exactly what this blockage entailed in terms of access, see Summers (2009)
cleanse “pollution” and “unhealthy” elements in favour of “health” and “hygiene” (Lagerkvist, 2008: 123, 134).

In response to the governmental policing of the Internet, and to its “harmony makers” in off-line conflicts, the notion of having “been harmonised” (bei hexie le 被和谐了) has grown popular as a way of expressing discontent. The use of this passive grammatical voice (bei 被), dubbed by one commentator the “passive subversive” (Kuhn, 2010), indicates that one has been coercively made to (appear to) do something. The term gained such popularity that the “passive tense era” (beishidai 被时代) made the top of the list of Southern Metropolis Weekly’s 2009 list of most popular neologisms (Southern Metropolis Weekly, 2009), and bei was made quasi-official when an arm of the Education Ministry elected it the Chinese character of the year in 2009. Lei Yi, one judge of the event and a historian of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the term won by a landslide by popular Internet vote: “[w]e felt we should recognize this result … so we named ‘bei’ as the character most representative of China’s situation last year” (in Kuhn, 2010). Doubleleaf, a Beijing-based blogger who had his blog “harmonised”, meaning shut down, emphasised in an interview the subversive nature of bei:

“For centuries we’ve been told that the emperor represented the people’s interests … or that some organization or some leader represented our interests. People did not realize that they had ‘been represented’. This word of the year signals the awakening of citizens’ consciousness (in Kuhn, 2010).

Chinese netizens have made use of this language in particular to criticise the Chinese censorship of the Internet to shut down any uncomfortable discussion. For example, one Flash animation, found at an online competition to raise awareness about scientific development and harmonious society, features a Bulletin Board System (BBS) comment thread that gets “harmonised”. It shows the BBS thread of net jargon, discussions of a famous person, people trading insults and the posts being suddenly deleted. When one netizen asks what happened the answer is “they have been harmonised”. Finally, a smiling Hu Jintao appears alongside the slogan “Everyone is
responsible for a harmonious society” \textit{(renren you ze hexie shehui 人人有责，和谐社会)} (Martinsen, 2007; Zhuru cilei, 2007).

\textbf{Egao: Resistance in the sphere of politics and the political}

The Flash animation that has “been harmonised” is part of a wider form of online culture known as \textit{egao (恶搞)}, which has become popular since the launch of the harmonious policies and received international attention since around 2006. The term is made up of characters \textit{e (恶)} (which means bad or evil, and \textit{gao (搞)}, which means to change or deal with, leading to translations of the word as “evil jokes” (Li Hongmei, 2011: 71), “reckless doings” (Meng Bingchun, 2009: 52), or simply “spoofing” (Lagerkvist, 2010: 150). This spoofing culture uses irony and satire to mock power holders as well as government policies and practices.

Scholars have almost universally described \textit{egao} as a form of “resistance”, “subversion” or “contestation”.\footnote{For example Séverine Arsène (2010), Larry Diamond (2010: 74), Nigel Inkster (2010: 7.2), Tang Lijun and Yang Peidong (2011: 680, 682, 687), Seth Wiener (2011: 156) and Xiao Qiang (Xiao Qiang, 2011a: 52).} Many base their claim on George Orwell’s comment that “[e]very joke is a tiny revolution” (for example Li Hongmei, 2011: 72; Tang Lijun and Bhattacharya, 2011: 2.4). To a number of commentators, it is moreover based on an understanding of a discrepancy between on the one hand PRC party-state language, including \textit{tifa} like “harmonious world” and “harmonious society”, and on the other hand an “alternative political discourse” (Meng Bingchun, 2009: 39) or “hidden transcript” (Perry, 2007: 10; Esarey and Xiao Qiang, 2008: 752; Meng Bingchun, 2009: 39), including expressions like having “been harmonised”.\footnote{Scholars have discussed this discrepancy in various contexts. See for examples Perry Link, Richard Madsen, and Paul Pickowicz (2001), He Zhou (2008), Esarey and Xiao Qiang (2008), Patricia Thornton (2002).}

The most pervasive scholarly interpretation of this relation between official and unofficial discourse has been in terms of Bakhtinian carnival – an unruly and fantastic time and space in medieval and renaissance Europe. One volume characterizes the entire Chinese cyberspace as a quasi-separate space of the carnivalesque (Herold and Marolt, 2011). On this understanding, the carnival is an event in a time and space
where rules are suspended, separate from normal constraints (Herold, 2011: 11, 12). It is the antithesis of normal life, “free and unrestricted” (Bakhtin cited in Herold, 2011: 12). Similarly, to Li Hongmei, this space “marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions” (Bakhtin, 1984 [1965]: 10, cited in Li Hongmei, 2011: 72). Meng Bingchun reads a “collective attempt at resistance” (2011: 44) in the egao “virtual carnival” (2011: 45, 46). This resistance is said to be directed against the “official” (Meng Bingchun, 2011: 46) or “established” (Li Hongmei, 2011: 71) order. Tang Lijun and Syamantak Bhattacharya, despite reading egao as carnivalesque, take it to reveal a “widespread feeling of powerlessness, rather than offering the general public any political power” (2011). Nonetheless, they see in such online spoofs “the potential to generate a chain of related satirical work, which can create a satire movement and subject power to sustained shame and ridicule” (Tang Lijun and Bhattacharya, 2011).

One scholar who has remained decidedly skeptical to such claims about resistance is Johan Lagerkvist, who asks with regards to egao: “[i]s it a weapon of the weak, or is it a rather feeble expression among well-heeled and largely apolitical urban youth?” (2010: 151). Lagerkvist explains egao as “[p]ermeated with irony and an ambivalence that occasionally resembles, or indeed is, resistance” (2010: 146). Nonetheless, to him, “[t]he crux of the matter is only what larger influence you have on politics, if that is at all desired, if your critique is too subtle” (2010: 146). Therefore, he concludes:

[i]nstead of viewing the egao phenomenon as politically subversive, at least in the short term, it may make more sense to view it as the growth of an alternate civility, more indicative of social and generational change, building up ever more pressure against the political system – in the long term (Lagerkvist, 2010: 158).

To Lagerkvist the point of egao then, for now at least, is to vent anger in a non-revolutionary manner. Egao is “neither performed to be, nor perceived as, a direct threat against the Party-state” (Lagerkvist, 2010: 159).

In this chapter I take Lagerkvist’s point that irony is not by definition radical or revolutionary. This claim in itself, however, says little about what it does do (or undo), but simply leaves the question open. In previous analyses of egao, the focus is clearly
on potential for changing politics, but none of the authors sustain any discussion about what they mean by this “politics”. In order to understand their disagreement, we can benefit from returning to the distinction made at the outset of this thesis between politics in the narrow sense, or politics, and politics in the wider sense, or the political. I have taken the latter to be concerned with “the establishment of that very social order which sets out a particular, historically specific account of what counts as politics and defines other areas of social life as not politics” (Edkins, 1999: 2). On such a reading, “depoliticization” is equal to “a reduction to calculability” or the application of rules (Edkins, 1999: 1, 11). To repoliticize, again, is instead “to interrupt discourse, to challenge what have, through discursive practices, been constituted as normal, natural, and accepted ways of carrying on” (Edkins, 1999: 12).

In view of this differentiation between politics and the political, Lagerkvist’s evaluation of egao with regards to what larger influence it has on politics seems to refer to politics in the narrow sense, rather than the political. Tang and Bhattacharya’s judgment of egao with reference to its potential to “create a satire movement” seems to be concerned with the same narrow politics. These accounts, then, dismiss egao as not political unless it can achieve some movement or influence with regards to politics (in the narrow sense). This makes the scholars’ readings of egao themselves depoliticizing. My concern, by contrast, is rather with the question of the political, and I will comment on this in more detail at the end of this chapter.118

It is in this realm of discourse and the political that I ground an understanding of resistance. The previous chapter pointed to the problems of conceptualizing resistance as revealing “realities”, “the facts”, when what we are dealing with is a hyperreal system. Rather, I argued, we need to think about theory and resistance as a challenge. What does this mean? Roland Bleiker has written about the type of resistance that occurs in this realm of the discursive, a resistance that revolves around interactions between different types of speech. To him:

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118 My discussion of the literatures on egao in relation to politics and the political here draws on Nordin and Richaud (2012), where we discuss the distinction as perceived by the young netizens who produce and consume it, based on ethnographic fieldwork and interviews.
[o]vertly committed art forms often do no more than promote a particular position.... Aesthetic politics, by contrast, has to do with the ability of artistic engagements to challenge, in a more fundamental way, how we think about and represent the political. Here the political content lies in the aesthetic form itself, which often is not political in an explicit and immediately recognisable manner (Bleiker, 2009: 8).

On this understanding, Bleiker has shown that engaging with language is engaging in social struggle (2000: 43). Alternative forms of language, he argues, can challenge “the state’s promotion of a black-and-white, one-dimensional and teleological approach to history” by celebrating multiplicity and making ambivalence part of language (Bleiker, 2000: 43). He moreover shows that this is part of global politics through drawing on David Campbell to the effect that the everyday life in which these forms of linguistic resistance are deployed is not “a synonym for the local level, for in it global interconnections, local resistances, transterritorial flows, state politics, regional dilemmas, identity formations, and so on are always already present” (Campbell, 1996: 23, cited in Bleiker, 2000: 44). Alternative forms of speech and writing, then, show how political change can be brought about by forms of resistance that “deliberately and self-consciously stretch, even violate existing linguistic rules” because in doing so they can provide us “with different eyes, with the opportunity to reassess anew the spatial and political [and, I would add, temporal] dimensions of global life” (Bleiker, 2000: 45). Rather than seeking a quick-fix by revealing the scandalous “truth”, or forming a mass movement explicitly aimed at intervening in narrow politics, this discursive form of resistance works through pushing gradually at the terms in which we can conceive of the world. It thereby “resists the temptation to provide ‘concrete’ answers to ‘concrete’ questions” (Bleiker, 2000: 45). In the rest of this chapter I examine egao as one particular instance that can help us think further about such linguistic resistance in/to “harmonious world”.

Resisting harmonisation and deconstructive reading

The above example of having “been harmonised” shows how Chinese netizens are “being harmonised” by the government, but also how they are negotiating such “harmonisation” through language and grammar. This is what I mean when I write
that *tifa* are iterative. By re-citing official language and reinscribing it in other chains of meaning, Chinese netizens are turning its purported message against itself. Where Hu’s harmony purports to be inclusive, peaceful and open, its re-iteration with a simple grammatical modifier, *bei*, reads this official take on harmony as being exclusive, violent and working to close down possibilities for difference. This shows us that language is indeed a crucial part not only for the government to try to harmonise dissidents, but also for these to negotiate (or possibly resist) such harmonisation.

This language play is thus made possible by iterability, which means we can remove the repeatable meaning of a term like “harmony” from the specific context in which it was first deployed and “recognize other possibilities in it by inscribing it or grafting it onto other chains” (Derrida, 1988: 9, cf. Massey, 2005: 19). For this reason “harmony” does not have one fixed meaning, but we can play with it, graft it into other chains of signification that can reveal meanings that were always already there in harmony in the first place. This possibility is exploited by netizens. We can read deconstruction taking place in the term “harmony” in many places. What dissident use does is precisely shake it loose from its intended meaning in Hu’s policy documents, reversing and displacing its meaning, without therefore separating it from that policy discourse. Below I illustrate how this takes place in various tactics of resisting harmonisation in China. The point is to not simply accept “harmony” as having one straightforward meaning, to obey, avoid or bin the term. Instead, we can, as Baudrillard would have it, “recycle” it in potentially subversive ways.

*Recycling harmony (和谐) 1: Close reading of the radicals that make up a character*
Derrida’s way of reading a text is often termed “close reading”, which involves paying attention to the details of structure, grammar and etymology of a term or text. This is a tactic we often use in academia when we discuss the meaning of Chinese terms through a close reading of the radicals that make up a character. This is also a common practice among netizens, in online discussions and in other media, like the above logo from the Economic Observer for its feature section on the 2006 NPC and CPPCC Sessions (Martinsen, 2006).

The English term “harmony” comes from Greek harmos or harmonía, meaning “joint, agreement, concord”.119 和谐 is usually translated as “harmonious” or “concordant”, the individual characters carrying the same meaning. 和 is composed of radicals 言 “words” and 皆 “all”.120 With the 口 “mouth” radical the 和 character, pronounced hé, can signify singing in harmony, or talking together.121 If what we see in China’s current “harmonising” of dissidents is a harmonious society or harmonious world, harmony here retains only its meaning of “singing in harmony” (as we saw through the example of Expo avatars singing the Expo song in harmony), its “talking together” is only in “agreement” or “concord”.

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120 According to dictionary definition (Karlgren, 1974 [1923]: 364; Hanyu da zidian weiyuanhui, 1995).
Recycling harmony (和) 2: Differently pronounced Chinese character gives alternative meaning

![Image]

Figure 10: 和 pronounced  hú  is the battle cry when winning a game of mah-jong  
(Source: Zhang Facai, 2008)

This, however, takes us to another tactic of bringing out and playing with the differently pronounced alternative meanings that Chinese characters often have. 和 can also be pronounced  hú, a battle cry of victory when completing a game of mah-jong. Through this battle cry competition or conflict returns to visibility in harmony, as the excluded term on which it relies. This disruption acknowledges the antagonism involved in play, unsettling the notion of permanent harmonious “win-win” purported by the party-state. It reminds us of the violence we have traced in previous chapters of a dominant China’s turning other into self.

What goes on in this reading is in a sense the first of the two moves of Derrida’s deconstructive double gesture. We have read Hu’s harmony in a way that is faithful to its purported meaning, where the end-state of “harmony” rests on the exclusion of violence, discord and conflict. His harmonious world, as we saw in chapter 1, is one that has done away with misgivings and estrangement, where everyone wins and no one loses. The “inevitable choice” (or what if we were nasty we could call “the single prescribed future without responsibility of choosing”) is a future harmonious world order where  China will always stand for “fairness and justice”. Anyone who disagrees with this sense of justice is simply wrong and irrational, euphemised as “unscientific”.

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What the pronunciation hú does is acknowledge the excluded other of Hu’s “harmony”, namely discord and competition. Hú can only be achieved after vanquishing the opponent, there is no win-win here. The hú of mah-jong, just like the harmonious Tianxia utopia, is premised on the superiority of the self to the other. Only this hierarchy can establish order, harmony or hú. Acknowledging that competition is always already there in harmony, implied in the alternative pronunciation hú, I propose that we can acknowledge a third tactic of resistance, the play with homonymous characters.

Recycling harmony (和谐) 3: “Rivercrab” (héxiè) as a near-homonym for “harmony” (héxié)

Derrida’s first deconstructive move is reversal, identifying an operational binary – such as harmony/discord – and showing how the exclusion of the second term from the first is artificial and that in fact the first is reliant on the second. An equally important move is displacement, the creation of a term that is not fully contained within the old order. We can get at such a displacement through paying attention to “rivercrabs” (héxiè 河蟹), a near homonym for “harmony” (héxié 和谐). Before I go on to discuss these rivercrabs in more detail, I should point out that these two deconstructive moves are not separate, chronologically or otherwise. My discussion of them here in turn is for the benefit of my reader, in order to illustrate more clearly what this dissident language play can do for us.

Similar sounding characters are often used to replace sensitive words as a way to get through the keyword searches of censorship software that has been bolstered as a way to simultaneously avoid and criticise “being harmonised”. When netizens are blocked by harmonising government software from writing “harmony” (héxié 和谐), they can replace the term by the similar sounding characters for “rivercrabs” (héxiè 河蟹). In recent years, the rivercrab has become popular as a signifier of resistance. In

122 Indeed, the very game of mah-jong is itself involved in contestation as a battle ground for politics, where popular practice has been shown to resist official campaigns to regulate and “sanitize” a “popular mah-jong” (民间麻将) and promote “healthy mahjong” (健康麻将 or 卫生麻将, meaning no gambling) as “a competitive national sport and a symbol of China’s distinctive cultural legacy” (Festa, 2006: 9).
popular Chinese language a “crab” is a violent bully, making its image a new playful and satirical, but heavily political, way of criticising the harmonising “rivercrab society” (Xiao Qiang, 2007).^{123}

Figure 11: Insist on three watches, establish rivercrab society (Source: Xuanlv, 2010)

One popular satire on it can be seen in the above rivercrab with three watches. The caption overhead reads: “insist on three watches, establish rivercrab society” (jianchi san ge daibiao, chuangjian hexie shehui 坚持三个戴表，创建和谐社会). The first phrase is a nonsensical mockery of the party slogan “insist on the three represents” (jianchi san ge daibiao 坚持三个代表)\(^ {124} \) and the second is a mockery of the slogan “establish harmonious society” (chuangjian hexie shehui 创建和谐社会). The political tactic here is one of intentional (mis)reading of official discourse, an iteration of party-state language against itself in order to reveal aspects of harmony that remain hidden from view in official discourse. Again, the acknowledgement of the purported message and its hierarchical binary as well as the first deconstructive move of reversing that hierarchy are here in this picture, this is not a separate stand-alone symbol or event.

\(^{123}\) As a simple indication of the popularity of satirical depictions of the “rivercrab”, a Google image search for the Chinese term “rivercrab society” (河蟹社会) gave ca 212 000 hits on 3 March 2011.

\(^{124}\) The “three represents” is previous General Secretary Jiang Zemin’s legacy tifa, which became a guiding ideology of the CCP at its Sixteenth Party Congress in 2002, together with Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, and Deng Xiaoping Theory. It stipulates that the CCP should be representative to advanced social productive forces, advanced culture, and the interests of the overwhelming majority. The tifa was part of the shift to Chineseness as a legitimising force of the CCP as a ruling party representative of the majority of Chinese people as opposed to its original legitimisation as a vanguard revolutionary party driven by the “proletariat”. It also helped legitimise the inclusion of capitalist business elites into the party.
However, the rivercrab also displaces this binary and functions as a new term which does not obey that order in any simple manner, but rather shakes it up and brings to the fore the irresolvable contradiction between these terms.

To clarify the position of my analysis here in relation to Derrida’s, I speak of the rivercrab as a “second term” which displaces the harmony/discord binary implied in Hu’s harmonious world and society. As such, it does not obey the order of that binary in a simple manner. However, it also does not necessarily function as a new “master term” in the way Derrida often seems to understand the role of a new term.

This mockingly reiterative form of resistance is not confined to the Internet egao culture, but has spread beyond its online origins to impact both on official state media and on forms of resistance offline. Artist Ai Weiwei staged one such example that received attention in the West some time before his infamous detention by the authorities. When his newly built Shanghai studio was to be demolished by the authorities, Ai threw a grand farewell party in November 2010, to which he invited several hundred friends, bands and other supporters to feast on a banquet consisting of rivercrabs. Ai was put in house arrest in Beijing to prevent him from attending the banquet, but the event took place nonetheless with supporters chanting: “in a harmonious society, we eat rivercrabs” (Branigan, 2010).

**Party-state response**

The official party-state strategies of responding to such resistance take the form of harmonising it, ignoring it, or on occasion acknowledging its presence whilst attempting to again re-read its meaning, significance and implications in an effort at downplaying its critical potential. With respect to the “passive subversive” bei making the top of lists of neologisms in 2009, a *Xinhua* article displays the latter tactic. The article stresses state tolerance through emphasising that the poll, which resulted in bei being elected character of the year, was “jointly conducted by a linguistic research centre under the Ministry of Education and the state-run Commercial Press”. The tense was said “to convey a sense of helplessness in deciding one’s own fate” and to reflect “dissatisfaction over the abuse of official power” (Xinhua, 2010c). The example
of “being suicided” (bei zisha 被自杀) was discussed, explaining that the abuse of official power concerned was perpetrated by a local official, who was duly sentenced to death by higher authorities. Other examples were “being volunteered” (bei ziyuan 被自愿) and “being found a job” (bei jiuye 被就业). From the “passive subversive” bei the article turns into proof of how good and improving the government is:

‘[b]ei’ was not censored in the government-run poll of buzzwords, and grassroots’ voices are finally being heard and even recognized by the government ... The government is beginning to respond to inquiries from the public, instead of ‘dodging’ them as it did before (Xinhua, 2010c).

Yet much resistance is still treated with violence or silence by Chinese official sources. According to interviews by Tessa Thorniley at Ai Weiwei’s rivercrab banquet over 40 domestic media sources were invited and none showed up, and amongst the over 50 media outlets that interviewed Ai in house arrest regarding the event the only domestic media that spoke to him was the English language edition of conservative paper Global Times (Goldkorn, 2010). Within half a year of the rivercrab banquet, Ai had been detained by Chinese police, accused of a number of crimes. After 81 days in detention he was released on “bail” (取保候审), on the condition that he did “not speak” (Branigan, 2011; Committee to Protect Journalists, 2011; US Asia law NYU, 2011). During his disappearance Chinese Internet sites such as Sina Weibo blocked searches on Ai Weiwei (艾未未), a number of his nicknames and puns on his name, including “艾未” (Ai Wei), “未未” (Wei Wei), “艾” (Ai), “未” (Wei), “艾胖子” (Fatty Ai), “胖子” (Fatty) and “月半子” (Moon Half Son). They also blocked writing including the term “未来”, meaning “future”, which is built up of characters similar to “Weiwei” (Xiao Qiang, 2011b).

ONCO-OPERATIVE HARMONY

From the above analysis we see that there are similarities between Derridean approaches to reading deconstruction in academia and practices of subversive iteration of “harmony” amongst dissident netizens in contemporary China. The possibilities for alliances that reside within such shared tactics are potentially valuable to both parties and may help us here to bridge the theory/practice divide.
Derrida and Baudrillard were both masters of language play, frequently building on the various meanings that can be drawn out of words by way of their etymological roots, their different pronunciations, by playing with homonyms and near-homonyms and by combining words into new ones to reverse and displace previous binaries. Such techniques pervade the writing of both thinkers.125

However, this is not to say that the similar practice of Chinese language that I outline above is an entirely new phenomenon created by recent practices of Internet censorship and/or influences from some “Western postmodernity”. On the contrary, the struggles and practices that I have outlined have a long and rich history in China. Linguistic play with characters and homonyms has been a sensitive topic in China for millennia. Such practices have also been known to academics in the Anglophone world for decades. For example, a 1938 article argues that literary persecution was especially cruel during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911 AD) [Ku Chieh-Kang, 1938 [1935]: 254], and continues with a description that could just as well be of contemporary Chinese censorship regimes on the Internet:

under the circumstances they [Chinese scholars, artists, intellectuals and others] could do nothing but resort to veiled satire. This being the situation, their words and writings were spied on and scrutinized; if they did not use every care they suffered the severest punishments (Ku Chieh-Kang, 1938 [1935]: 254).126

But, the author continues, although the Qing were the worst offenders, similar practices of harsh censorship had taken place since the Qin (361-206 BC) and Han (206 BC-8 AD), the first two dynasties of what is typically considered imperial China.

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125 In Derrida, some such terms that I have touched upon in the course of this thesis include iterability, which plays on “reiterate” and combines the Latin iter (“again”) with the Sanskrit itara (“other”) (Wortham, 2010: 78), and différence, which combines the two meanings of French différence, difference and deferral, “changing an ‘e’ to an ‘a’ adds time to space” (Massey, 2005: 49). It also includes terms such as artfactuality, activirtuality, circonfession, avenir/à venir, hauntologie and so on. Despite what may be interpreted as a dismissal at points of Derrida’s deployment of word play (as discussed in chapter 1. See also Baudrillard, 1996 [1990]: 25), Baudrillard uses very similar tactics in his deployment of terms such as seduction, drawing on the original Latin sense of seducere, “to lead away”, and semiorrhage, semiotic haemorrhage (Baudrillard, 2002 [2000]: 208).

126 I should be noted that this article was written by a Chinese author at a time when the 1911 nationalist revolution had recently thrown the Qing dynasty from power, which may have affected this commentary.
The article goes on to list numerous death sentences during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 AD), occasioned by the “homophonic nature of certain words employed” (1938 [1935]: 262). As in contemporary PRC, although “misreading” set texts could be very dangerous (1938 [1935]: 296-301), the attempt to provide set phrases and pre-structured models for expression could not prevent such double meanings from seeping through text (1938 [1935]: 263). There is thus Chinese historical precedent of interplay between violent oppression of speech and the kind of linguistic resistance that builds on reiterative, mocking punnery in ways similar to the contemporary deployment of rivercrabs.

**Crabs as cancerous disease**

Where associations emerging from Chinese language aligns crabs with harmony, bullies and competition, most European languages associate it with the disharmony of the body that shares its name: cancer.127 In what follows I introduce the European roots of this term in order to foreground my subsequent analysis of the above “harmony/rivercrabs”, where I argue that these “rivercrabs” operate precisely according to a cancerous logic.

The term “cancer” is originally Latin, meaning “crab or creeping ulcer”, with its etymological roots in Greek *karkinos*, said to have been applied to such tumours because they were surrounded by swollen veins that looked like the limbs of a crab (Demaitre, 1998: 620-6; Oxford Dictionaries, 2011b). Although the European term, like the Chinese one, has mythological connotations,128 a contemporary dictionary entry for “cancer” describes it as “a malignant growth or tumour resulting from an uncontrolled division of cells”, but also as “an evil or destructive practice or phenomenon that is hard to contain or eradicate” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2011b).

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127 Scandinavian languages have interpreted cancer to equate a crayfish, rather than a crab, to give the Swedish *kräfta*, Norwegian *kreft* and Danish *kraft*.

128 In astronomy, the “Cancer” constellation represents Hercules crushing a crab with his foot. This tale derives from Greek mythology, where the crab nipped Heracles when he was battling the monster Hydra and was crushed. The mother deity Hera who was at odds with Heracles at the time honoured the crab’s courageous efforts by placing it in the heaven. In astrology, the cancer/crab is the fourth sign of the zodiac, which the sun enters at the northern summer solstice, about 21 June (Oxford Dictionaries, 2011a). The term also has spatial connotations, indicating the direction south, as in the tropic of cancer.
In this second capacity, cancer is not separate from contemporary understandings of international politics and visions of a harmonious world. Rather, the language of cancer and tumours has long been common in IR and politics, and cancer is frequently used as a metaphor for moral and political ills on the body politic to be cured or removed. At the same time, descriptions of biomedical cancer often resort to metaphors or similes borrowed from societal relations and from military conflict and battle. In Chinese language, the close link between security in the medical and political realms is explicit in the character zhi (治), which refers to both therapy (zhiliáo 治療) and governance (zhili 治理) (Unschuld, 2010: xxvi; Cheung, 2011: 7). Many studies have shown how the knowledge systems of Western biomedicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) reflect the intellectual and political landscape in which they respectively developed.

As such, many have understood the spatial distance between China and Europe as a foundation for an epistemological difference in understanding of their medical bodies, which directly parallels that which is claimed to underpin the understanding of the

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129 Hobbes gave a detailed analysis of dangers to the state as illnesses to the body politic (Hobbes, 1996: 221-30), building on an established metaphor of societies as bodies (Hale, 1971). For another example of early European use, Italian thinker Francesco Guicciardini, writing in the 16th century, constantly repeats the metaphors of medicine and cure. Guicciardini identifies the disease with the Italian city states' willingness to ally with outside states that are more powerful than themselves, and cautions against ignoring “how dangerous it is to use medicine which is stronger than the nature of the disease” (Guicciardini, 1984: 20-1). The French Revolution saw the use of illness/therapy metaphors to justify the terreur as a cure for societal illness (Musolf, 2003: 328). In contemporary scholarship, Susan Sontag in her famous Illness as Metaphor singled out cancer as a type of “master illness” that is “implicitly genocidal” (Sontag, 1991: 73-4, 84). Otto Santa Anna describes how the American civil rights movement used cancer as a metaphor for racism in the 1960s (Santa Anna, 2003: 215-16, 222). In contemporary IR Kevin Dunn has written at length about the how Mobutu’s cancer-ridden body led to a recasting of him as a cancer on the body politic of the Republic of Zaire, and Zaire in turn as a tumour on the region (Dunn, 2003: especially 139-42). See also Deborah Wills (2009) for recent use of “cancer” terminology in English language IR, and Wang Yizhou (2010: 11) for similar use in Chinese language IR.

130 For a good overview of such metaphorical use in patients and media, see Lupton (2003). For a good overview of other forms of cultural and artistic expression relating to the narrativisation of cancer, see Stacey (1997).


132 For its treatment in recently discovered Chinese medical literature, see Lo and Cullen (2005). For commentary on the parallel emergence of political and medical epistemologies in imperial China, see Unschuld (2010). For commentary on parallel developments of political and medical knowledge in Europe, see Have (1987) and Stibbe (1997).
Chinese geo-body, examined in previous chapters. Western biomedicine, it is thus said, follows Descartes and builds on the idea that parts of the body are discrete and can be calculated, measured and cured in isolation (Have, 1987; Kaptchuk, 2000). Chinese medicine is said to build instead on a “holistic” idea of the body where illness is explained in terms of a “pattern of disharmony” (Kaptchuk, 2000: 4). Just as a bounded notion of space is typically portrayed in terms of an imposition on China by Western imperialism, so too is a biomedical imaginary and representation of discrete body parts portrayed as an imposition by the West and a catching up by a China that had fallen behind (Cheung, 2011: 9; Gilman, 1988: 149, 151, 154).

With regards to the geo-body, I have argued throughout previous chapters that its two spatial imaginaries (that of discrete units and that of a holistic system) are not mutually exclusive, but rather coexist in practices in contemporary China. The scope of this thesis does not allow for a thorough deconstruction of the parallel epistemology that is applied to debates over the medical body. Suffice it to say at this point that contemporary literature on Chinese medicine typically reflects on how biomedicine and TCM are complementary. Most importantly for my argument here, and as I will explain in what follows, TCM and biomedicine have produced strikingly

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133 This imagination of the human body is particularly clear in writing on pictorial representations thereof. The negotiation of Chinese-Western power relations and self/other hierarchisation through modes of pictorial representation has been traced in the mid-19th Century medical paintings of Lam Qua, who focused on depicting tumours on Chinese bodies for Western consumption. Discussions of these can be found in Gilman (1988) and Heinrich (2008), as can some of Lam Qua’s pictures of tumours and abscesses (Gilman, 1988: 150; Heinrich, 2008: 50, 54, 55, 81, 82, 83, 84, 86, 87), as well as earlier and later Chinese images of such growths (Heinrich, 2008: 57, 91, 92; see also Barnes, 2005: 292).

134 Such an endeavour might point to the early exchange and hybrid nature of information, and to similarities of TCM and early forms of European medicine: the inner body as masculine (or Yang) and the outer body as feminine (or Yin) (for expression in European tradition, see Erickson, 1997: 10, for expression in Chinese tradition, see Liu Zhanwen and Liu Liang, 2009: 12); the focus on balance of a holistic system (for expression in European tradition, see Turner, 2003: 2, for expression in Chinese tradition, see Unschuld, 2010: xxv); the focus on bodily flows and the understanding of blockage of flows as cause for disease (for expression in European tradition, see Turner, 2003: 2, for expression in Chinese tradition, see Liu Zhanwen and Liu Liang, 2009: 28), the discursive parallels to the societal body and the need for governance of both societal and medical body (for expression in European tradition, see Porter, 1997: 158; Turner, 2003: 2, for expression in Chinese tradition, see Unschuld, 2010), and so on.

135 There are many examples of this (for example Cui Yong et al., 2004; Bao Ting et al., 2010; Chiaramonte and Lao Lixing, 2010; Dorsher and Peng Zengfu, 2010; Wong and Sagar, 2010).
similar responses to the appearance of cancer: to cleanse and purge in conjunction with studied manipulation of the immune system.

Reading cancer and the autoimmune in Baudrillard and Derrida

The previous chapter drew on Baudrillard's interest in the pre-programmed character of contemporary culture to examine the (re)production of human bodies as computer coded avatars on the Expo screen. His interest in the coding of the human body also extended to the replication and transmission of data on the micro level, in the form of genetic code and cellular regeneration. As pure information, the human body is not understood as the source of selfhood, but rather as an effect produced by the code (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]: 98, see also Toffoletti in Smith, 2010: 28). Embedded in this code is the potential for cancer and autoimmune disease (Baudrillard, 2002 [2000]: 98, 207).

According to Baudrillard, consumer society or European democracy is driven by a “perverse” logic (2002 [2000]: 97, 207), where a range of phenomena – terrorism, fascism, violence, depression, and so on – are the outcome of “an excess of organization, regulation and rationalization within a system” (2002 [2000]: 97). These societies tend to suffer from an excess of rationality and logic, surveillance and control, which in turn leads to the emergence for no apparent reason of “internal pathologies … strange dysfunctions … unforeseeable, incurable accidents … anomalies”, which disrupt the system’s capacity for totality, perfection and reality invention (2002 [2000]: 97). This is the logic that Baudrillard reads of an excessive system that fuels the growth of anomalies – just like cancer and autoimmune disease (Baudrillard, 2002 [2000]).

What characterises these anomalies in Baudrillard’s theorising is that “they have not come from elsewhere, from ‘outside’ or from afar, but are rather a product of the ‘over-protection’ of the body – be it social or individual” (Smith, 2010: 59):

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136 Like cancer, the question of immunity reinforces the close link between the governance of the socio-political and the bio-medical body, as “immunity” was originally a legal concept in ancient Rome (Cohen, 2009: 3). For my analysis of cancer and autoimmunity in Baudrillard’s work, I focus on the various articles collected in Screened Out (2002 [2000]), and particularly the essay “Aids: Virulence or Prophylaxis?” (2002 [1997]).
[e]very structure, system or social body which ferrets out its negative, critical elements to expel them or exorcise them runs the risk of catastrophe by total implosion and reversion, just as every biological body which hunts down and eliminates all its germs, bacillae and parasites – in short, all its biological enemies – runs the risk of cancer or, in other words, of a positivity devouring its own cells. It runs the risk of being devoured by its own anti-bodies (Baudrillard, 2002 [1997]: 3).

On this reading, “the system’s overcapacity to protect, normalise and integrate” (Smith, 2010: 60) (we could say “harmonise”) is shown throughout society as natural immunity is replaced by artificial systems of immunity – like pre-programmed firewalls (Baudrillard, 2002 [2000]: 98). This replacement happens in the name of science and progress (or perhaps a “scientific outlook on development”).

Derrida developed a strikingly similar deployment of the autoimmune, where for example the West since 9/11 is “producing, reproducing, and regenerating the very thing it seeks to disarm” (2003a: 99). Derrida analyses this “perverse” logic in terms of an autoimmune process (2003a: 99); “that strange behaviour where a living being, in quasi-suicidal fashion, ‘itself’ works to destroy its own protection, to immunise itself against its ‘own’ immunity” (2003a: 94). This term recalls previous Derridean terms, but particularly reinforces Baudrillard’s claim about cancer and immunity: “[i]n an over-protected space, the body loses all its defences” (Baudrillard, 2002 [1997]: 3). In this way, to Baudrillard and Derrida, in cancer and autoimmunity it is the system’s own logic that turns it against itself; the code works too well in its overzealous cleansing, integrating, normalising logic.

Derrida reads in this process a double and contradictory discourse of concurrent immunity and auto-immunity in endless circulation, where the system “conducts a

137 For Derrida, I draw mostly on his reading in “Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides” on 9/11 (2003a) and in Rogues: Two Essays on Reason (2005 [2003]-a), rather than on earlier mention of autoimmunity in texts such as “Faith and Knowledge” (1998) or Resistances of Psychoanalysis (1998 [1996], for some comments on the use of the “autoimmune” in this volume, see Wortham, 2010: 160).

138 As expressed by one commentator: “[u]ndecideability, aporia, antinomy, double bind: autoimmunity is explicitly inscribed in Rogues into a veritable ‘best of collection’ of Derrideo-phemes or deconstructo-nyms” (Naas, 2006: 29).
terrible war against that which protects it only by threatening it” (1998: 46). The immune and the autoimmune may not, then, be easily distinguishable: “murder was already turning into suicide, and the suicide, as always, let itself be translated into murder” (Derrida, 2005 [2003]-a: 59).

Derrida and Baudrillard – and others who have since deployed this aspect of their analyses – tend to describe autoimmune as generated by the current Western system, although they sometimes indicate the more general nature of such praxis (Thomson, 2005). I have argued in previous chapters that other phenomena they bring to our attention (such as the deconstructibility of language, or simulacra) cannot be confined in time and space to a bounded notion of “the West”, “late capitalism”, “postmodernity” or some other unit to which we posit China as the “other country”. In the same way, the observed “unfettered process of a techno-metastatic production of value, the hyperinflation of meaning and signs” is not confined to democracy/capitalism/the West/America that they take as the primary focus of their analyses (I. C. R., 2007). Rather, this cancer has its parallel in contemporary China, precisely in the form of rivercrabs.

**Reading cancer and the (auto)immune through biomedicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine**

To explain this point, and to dispel any understanding of my argument in terms of a Chinese “catching up”, let me elaborate slightly on how biomedicine and TCM have understood cancer.

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139 Derrida sometimes takes the term to denote a specific targeting of a body’s defence mechanisms, its “protecting itself against its self-protection” (Derrida, 1998: 73, note 27), which is closer to the biomedical definition of autoimmunity and further from its description of certain forms of cancer. At other times, the autoimmune involves an attack against any part of the body, “in short against its own” (son propre tout court) (Derrida, 1998: 44). We note here the numerous meanings of French “propre”, translated here as “own”, but which also means self-possession, propriety, property and importantly cleanliness, stressing again the cleansing that I emphasise in this chapter (cf. Spivak’s translation in Derrida, 1976 [1967]: 26). Where some have found this ambiguity problematic (Haddad, 2004: 39-41), I think it points to an important aspect of autoimmunity that is the impossibility of separating a part that “defends” a (geo)body from one that simply “is”. It acknowledges the malleability of the system. For this reason I also allow for (auto)immunity and cancer to denote the same process, as they do to Baudrillard.

The disease that in English is called cancer is called *ai* (癌) in modern TCM terminology, and cancerous tumours can also be referred to as *liu* (瘤). TCM philosophy is based on the idea that a body is healthy when it is in harmony, and illness and pain occur when harmony fails to be achieved, manifest in a “pattern of disharmony” (Bao Ting et al., 2010: 171). Cancer/*ai/liu* is on this view “a systemic disease from the start” (Schipper et al., 1995; Wong and Sagar, 2010: 3). Cancer and tumours are understood as the manifestation of disharmony (Bao Ting et al., 2010: 170; Chiaramonte and Lao Lixing, 2010: 344), and more specifically of the relative lack of *Zhengqi* (正气), a concept analogous to the biomedical notion of immune system competency/strength (Abbate, 2006; Dorsher and Peng Zengfu, 2010: 57). The understanding of TCM’s potential to aid the body in restoring harmony is similarly centred on immunity.143

Biomedicine, which has been associated with the West and with the imagination of body-parts as discrete and calculable, explains cancer in a very similar way, emphasising the role of immunity. In this school of thought, cancer is a development where transformed cells “acquire the ability to disregard the constraints of its environment and the body normal control mechanisms” [sic] (Wong and Sagar, 2010: 3), or “the abnormal and uncontrollable proliferation of cells which have the potential to spread to distant sites” (Chiaramonte and Lao Lixing, 2010: 343). Like TCM, biomedicine thus understands cancer as immune system failure (Chiaramonte and Lao Lixing, 2010: 349). Microscopically, cancer cells display features indicative of a faster proliferative rate and disorganised alignment in relation to other cells, and

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141 The first known description of *ai* comes from *Wei Ji Bao Shu* circa 1171 AD, in the Song Dynasty (Pan Mingji, 1992, in Bao Ting et al., 2010: 57). Cancerous tumours were also referred to as *liu* in inscriptions on oracle bones over 3,500 years old (Pan Mingji, 1992, in Bao Ting et al., 2010: 57).

142 For a more thorough explanation for the lay person of the philosophical foundations of TCM as well as an outline of its foundational texts, see Liu Zhanwen and Liu Liang (2009).

143 This is a marked trait throughout contemporary TCM literatures (Abbate, 2006; Lahans, 2008; Chiaramonte and Lao Lixing, 2010: 342, 349; Dorsher and Peng Zengfu, 2010: 57; Wong and Sagar, 2010: 3, 4, 15). TCM scepticism of biomedical forms of treatment – such as radiotherapy and chemotherapy – stems from their “collateral damage”, the killing of normal cells along with the malign cancer cells, which leads to further immune suppression and hence further reduction of *zhengqi*. TCM treatment focuses on strengthening *zhengqi* in order to maximize the immunity of the system beset by cancer. Herbal medicines used to treat cancer are thus (partly) focused on strengthening the body’s general immunity (*fuzheng*) (Lahans, 2008; Dorsher and Peng Zengfu, 2010: 57).
differences between cancer cells and normal cells are increasingly understood at the level of genetic code (Marcovitch, 2005: 111). The very code that is pre-programmed in the system thus has the capacity to produce the cells that threaten it, and the spread of malignancy in the system is a result of its failed attempts at “regulation” and cleansing.

Like cancer/ai/liu, the Chinese crab has early associations with cleaning and purification of spaces, with one legend having the emperor using the crab to rid his palace of the scorpions, fleas, mosquitoes, and mice that disturbed his harmony and caused dis-ease. In Europe, like in China, cancer has a long history of association with insufficient cleansing, since its description in pre-modern pathologies that attributed it to insufficient purging of black bile. One contemporary cancer self-help book likewise describes cancer in terms of societal disorder strikingly reminiscent of disruptions to the harmony conveyed by Hu Jintao and Zhao Tingyang respectively: “[c]ancer growths are made up of cells which belong to our body but which have stopped behaving in a co-operative and orderly fashion” (Reynolds, 1987: 26, cited in Lupton, 2003: 71). It further observes that the multiplication of cancer cells “has no purpose … unlike normal body cells we can think of cancer cells as unco-operative, disobedient, and independent … [n]ormal cells exist peacefully side by side with their neighbours” (Reynolds, 1987: 27, cited in Lupton, 2003: 71).

This description is certainly fitting to characterise the Chinese “rivercrabs” described above. Crabs/cancer disturb and threaten the harmony of the system. They are truly “malignant” in the sense that they disregard normal mechanisms of control and cleansing (they are unco-operative), and they are capable of spatio-temporal spread into secondary deposits or “metastases”. As such, we may understand crabs/cancer in terms of the European medieval rendition as a parasitic animal (Pouchelle, 1990: 169; Demaitre, 1998: 624), pervasive also in contemporary society (Herzlich and Pierret, 1987).

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144 Renditions of this lore can also be found online (The Vanishing Tattoo, 2011).
145 On this understanding, breast cancer for example was caused by insufficient cleansing by menstruation of the blood from the dregs of spoiled black bile (Caulhiaco and McVaugh, 1997: n. 9, 94, see also Demaitre, 1998: 618 and notes 37, 38). An overview of the development of European ideas of cancer can be found in Demaitre (1998).
Yet, crabs/cancer are indeed “a systemic disease from the start” (Wong and Sagar, 2010: 3), their malignancy is a direct product of the code. The possibility for drawing out the various meanings of hexie 和谐 explored at the outset of this chapter was always already there in the character – through its pictographic make-up, its alternative pronunciation as hù and through its homonym the rivercrab. Moreover, the ironic critique displayed by these iterations was provoked by Hu's policy of overzealous “harmonisation” and the online deployment of rivercrabs came about as a way to simultaneously avoid and criticise “being harmonised” by the great firewall and other government censorship software. In this way, it is the harmonious system itself that produces that which leads to disharmony. As such, rivercrabs are not simply unco-operative, but onco-operative: they operate like cancerous metastases that derive from the code of the system itself to cause dis-harmony and dis-ease.

THE COEVAL MULTIPLICITIES OF ONCO-OPERATIVE HARMONY

The claim I have made up to this point of the chapter is that the Chinese “harmonious” system is not so different from what Derrida and Baudrillard describe in contemporary “Western democracy” or late capitalist “consumer society”. Although China is often recast as the opposite of these systems and their logic – the “other country” – it seems to suffer from the same autoimmune problems. Its symptoms may be different, but the onco-operative character of its dis-ease is the same. What, then, are the implications of such an illness – and how do we deal with it?

Looking for cures in an onco-operative system

Biomedical and TCM treatments of cancer/ai/liu do, as I have indicated above, follow a similar pattern to those commonly prescribed for dealing with unco-operative elements of the geo-body. Biomedicine typically resorts to screening, “surgical strikes”, chemo- and radio-therapies (Marcovitch, 2005: 112). The lack of precision of these therapies give them a quasi-suicidal nature through which the parts of the body deemed “healthy” or “normal” become collateral damage. This in turn often further endangers the system through weakening its immune system. The alternative approach, of strengthening the system’s own immune capacity or zhengqi, urges the
system to auto-harmonise, to turn the bad qi into the good – another form of cleansing, or “purging the excessive” and ousting “evil Qi” (Liu Zhanwen and Liu Liang, 2009: 30). Both these ways of dealing with un-co-operative elements of the medical body thus echo the problems seen in relating to “others” in the geo-body: we eliminate through radical separation (cutting off) or through radical harmonisation (turning the bad into the good).

In this way, the on-co-operative character of the system means its over-zealous attempts at cleansing – through therapy (zhi liao) and governance (zhi li) – actually come to threaten the system itself. This, in turn, exposes an aporia at the very heart of the system, in that the dis-ease must be cured, but cannot be cured without sacrificing the system itself: “there is no effective prevention or therapy; the metastases invade the whole network ‘virtually’ ... He who lives by the same will die by he same” (Baudrillard, 2002 [1997]: 2). Or, in Derrida's words: “there is no absolutely reliable prophylaxis against the autoimmune. By definition” (Derrida, 2005 [2003]-b: 150-1).

To Baudrillard, the fact that cancer is a reflection of the body’s victimisation by the disruption of its genetic formula is thus what makes it impossible for conventional medicine to cure it: “[t]he current pathology of the body is now beyond the reach of conventional medicine, since it affects the body not as form, but as formula” (2002 [1997]: 1). To put it a different way, the fact that the system itself produces, through its own code, that which threatens it means there is little use looking to the rationality of the system to combat its excrescences: “[i]t is a total delusion to think extreme phenomena can be abolished. They will, rather, become increasingly extreme as our systems become increasingly sophisticated” (Baudrillard, 2002 [1997]: 7).

On Baudrillard’s reading, spontaneous self-regulation of systems is something well-known: systems produce accidents or glitches in their own programme, interfering with their own operation (Baudrillard, 2002 [1997]: 5). This enables systems to survive on a basis contrary to their own principles, against their own value-systems:

they have to have such a system, but they also have to deny it and operate in opposition to it.... But it is entirely as though the species were ... producing ... through cancer, which is a disruption of the genetic code and therefore a pathology of information, a resistance to the all-powerful principle of
cybernetic control.... With ... cancer, we might be said to be paying the prize for our own system: we are exorcising its banal virulence in a fatal form (Baudrillard, 2002 [1997]: 5).

Again, this is precisely how rivercrabs operate: they metastasise and spread through a disruption of the code that lets them slip through it’s pre-programmed screening/firewall/censorship. This is indeed a resistance to cybernetic control, but one generated by the system itself.

If we bring this analysis back to the discipline of IR, this way of understanding cancer complicates things. Within Chinese IR, Wang Yizhou has argued that analysing terrorism in terms of cancer calls for the question of how cancer comes into being. He reads it as a symptom of structural imbalance (Wang Yizhou, 2010: 11). Where military action can only ”cure the symptom but not the source”, harmonisation or re-balancing of the system will prevent radicalism from breeding (2010: 16). In view of the above explanation of cancer, we may concur with both him and Baudrillard that traditional treatment may only serve to aggravate the problem through weakening the system and causing collateral damage. However, having excavated the forms of therapy suggested by the “alternative” of “harmonisation” by TCM or Chinese IR, it appears that it stands equally powerless. Increasing harmonisation is unlikely to curb cancer/crabs, but may rather contribute to spurring them on. There is no use looking to the systems own rationality to combat the crabs it produces.

**Spatiotemporal bordering in an onco-operative system**

What, then, are the spatio-temporal implications of these crabs, as metastases of an (auto)immune and onco-operative system? Nick Vaughan-Williams (2007) has productively drawn on Derrida’s notion of autoimmunity to discuss spatial and temporal bordering. The temporal bordering he discusses draws on Brian Massumi’s description of “flashes of ... sovereign power” as a particular form of pre-programmed decision making in the “space of a moment” (Massumi, 2005: 6; Vaughan-Williams, 2007: 187-8). This parallels what Baudrillard thinks of as a pre-programmed instantaneous operation. Understanding borders in terms of this decisionist ontology highlights the specificity of contemporary wordplay and rivercrabs, in relation to
previous historical deployment of homonyms to avoid censorship in China, as described earlier in this chapter. Previous forms of bordering decisions with regards to such homonymous wordplay involved a deliberative process of human interpretation. In this era of the virtual and the hyper-real, the bordering decision is pre-programmed and instantaneous.

Vaughan-Williams, following Massumi, argues that this approach is the temporal equivalent of a tautology: "[t]he time form of the decision that strikes like lightning is the foregone conclusion. When it arrives, it always seems to have preceded itself. Where there is a sign of it, it has always already hit" (Massumi, 2005: 6, cited in Vaughan-Williams, 2007: 188). This form of decision is accordingly a foregone conclusion (or following Hu perhaps an “inevitable choice”) "because it sidesteps or effaces the blurriness of the present in favor of a perceived need to act on the future without delay", in the face of a threat of an indefinite future yet to come (Vaughan-Williams, 2007: 188; Massumi, 2005: 4-5).

Both authors read this as a temporal shift, from “prevention” to “pre-emption”, from the temporal register of the indefinite future tense to the future perfect tense: the “always-will-have-been-already” (Massumi, 2005: 6-10; Vaughan-Williams, 2007: 188). In parallel to the autoimmune, this politics induces rather than responds to events:

[r]ather than acting in the present to avoid an occurrence in the future, pre-emption brings the future into the present. It makes present the future consequences of an eventuality that may or may not occur, indifferent to its actual occurrence. The event’s consequences precede it, as if it had already occurred (Massumi, 2005: 7-8, cited in Vaughan-Williams, 2007: 188).

The Chinese practice of censoring/harmonising specific terms through its Great Firewall works through this form of pre-programmed code, which sensors in a “flash of sovereign power". Terms are censored pre-emptively to harmonise some not-yet-existing but possible future dissident deployment of a once unthreatening term (such as the term “future” 未来 itself, as seen earlier in this chapter in relation to Ai Weiwei’s detention). In this manner, PRC Internet censorship policy acts as a temporal bordering process: it pre-empts threats to the government’s version of “harmonious
world/society” that come from the future, thus securing time and the future as something that belongs to the state and not to the crabs or dissidents (c.f. Vaughan-Williams, 2007: 189).

As an actual wall, the form of electronic bordering that is exercised by the Great Firewall is also a form of spatial bordering, in that it is intimately connected to questions of sovereignty, territory and governmental power. Vaughan-Williams draws on William Walters to refer to this spatial bordering as “firewalling” – in contemporary China another term for having “been harmonised” by the Great Firewall is having “been GFWed” (Walters, 2006, for examples see Calon, 2007; Chow, 2010).

The self-attacking or autoimmune logic of such GFW-ing is clear in the “blocking” of Internet and telephone access that was used in attempts to harmonise Xinjiang during the 2009 riots. This firewalling was intended to prevent “splittism” from spreading, yet could only do so by splitting Xinjiang as a spatial unit off from the rest of China, in virtual/physical space. This, too, is the spacing by which the Great Firewall operates – to maintain a harmonious space, that space must be sealed off as a (virtual) geobody from the rest of the world. Again, what is described in Vaughan-Williams as “innovations in the ways sovereign power attempts to secure the temporal and spatial borders of political community” could refer to something less localised in time and space than may at first appear (Vaughan-Williams, 2007: 191).

The practices of Internet “harmonisation” in China can thus be described in terms of a bordering of time and space that has parallels in contemporary expressions of (auto)immunity in the European system. Having said this, the particular practice of using homonymous characters like the rivercrab, to simultaneously criticise and avoid “being harmonised” on the Chinese Internet, is a locally specific way of negotiating this particular kind of virtual bordering in time and space. This particular form and double function differentiates it from other forms of satire or political irony that can be found in other systems around the world. Moreover, in attempting to secure time and space as belonging to the state, these harmonising Chinese censorship regimes effectively provoke the kind of critical wordplay that I exemplify here through rivercrabs. In this way, cancer/crabs work within the system and yet repeatedly
escape it: where “harmonisation” may be understood as an attempt at temporal bordering, the experience of cancer has been described as a disturbance to such temporality, a “falling out of time” (Stacey, 1997: 10). The more the Chinese government attempts to secure, cleanse and harmonise, the more creative and subversive are the iterations that use its language against itself.

**Rivercrab metastases and heterotemporalities**

As a consequence of this (auto)immune logic of the onco-operative system, rivercrabs, like cancer cells, increasingly display features indicative of a faster proliferative rate and disorganised alignment in relation to other cells (Marcovitch, 2005: 111). In the “here-now”, crabs, like cancer, are marked by the way they spread and metastasise through mutation of the code. In this way, we can understand how Chinese crabs similarly migrate, multiply and change in what is precisely an “iterative” manner. Every crab draws on previous iterations of harmony and crabs, but also mutates into something different.

One example of such a “metastasis” can be seen in the figure below. It shows a replica of the logo for the computer game “World of Warcraft”, saying instead “Rivercrab World” (*hexie shijie* 河蟹世界). The text at the top means “do things others could never do” (做别人永远做不到的事), and the one below means “the late arrival of the battle expedition” (迟到的远征). The links to themes discussed throughout this thesis are marked, including the direct link to Hu’s “harmonious world” policy, the competition inherent in games and play and the violent military underpinning of harmonious world.

![Figure 12: Rivercrab world of warcraft (Source: Heifenbrug, 2008)](image)
The rivercrab metastasises in similar ways into numerous constellations – some very close copies, some with more creative distance. The rivercrab recurrently appears on blogs and can be found in an online dictionary compiled by China Digital Times (Xiao Qiang, 2010; China Digital Space, 2011a), where it appears together with dozens of other characters and expressions that have metastasised from similar homonymic wordplay and in reaction to governmental harmonisation. It also appears as a permanent feature on the cap of another Internet meme, the “Green Dam Girl” (绿坝娘). The Green Dam Girl is an anthropomorphism of the “Green Dam Youth Escort” software (绿坝-花季护航) that was developed under the direction of the Chinese government to filter Internet content on individual computers.\(^{146}\) The Green Dam Girl and rivercrab also appear in merchandise (Xu Yuting, 2009; Gaofudev, 2011; Lotahk, 2011), numerous cartoons (Hecaitou, 2009a; Hexie Farm, 2011) and music videos (Stchi, 2009; Tutuwan, 2009; DZS manyin, 2010) that typically work through copies of copies, interweaving the themes and symbols discussed throughout this thesis.

In one such music video, the connection between rivercrabs, harmony and Tianxia is once more highlighted (Tutuwan, 2009). This cover-song called “Harmony or die” features the chorus “Green dam, green dam – rivercrab/harmonise your entire family (lv ba, lv ba, hexie ni quanjia 绿坝绿坝 - 河蟹／和谐你全家), sometimes writing the same-sounding lyrics as “harmony” (和谐), sometimes as “rivercrab” (河蟹) in the subtitles. The second verse begins:

Green dam - green dam, will kill you in the bud.
Rivercrabs all under heaven, arrogant attributes erupt
[She] has asked you not to open your eyes too wide
Is it possible that [she is] envious and jealous?\(^{147}\)

\(^{146}\) According to China Digital Space: “Pre-installation of Green Dam software was originally intended for all new computers; however, because the proposed policy proved deeply unpopular, mandatory pre-installation has been delayed to an undetermined date. Green Dam girl first appeared sporadically in June 2009 on Baidu’s online encyclopaedia” (China Digital Space, 2011b). Some, however, suggested that the actual reason for the government’s about-face was the many security flaws within the software that allowed hackers to take over computers (jozjozjoz, 2009), and that it was built on copyright and open sourcecode violations (Koman, 2009). Popular Chinese blogger Hecaitou (和菜头) says the Green Dam Girl shows the creativity of the post-80s generation in resisting Internet regulation (Hecaitou, 2009a).

\(^{147}\) 绿坝—绿坝 把你萌杀 (lv ba - lv ba, ba ni meng sha)
This kind of video typically brings together numerous key elements discussed here with reference to the onco-operative nature of contemporary Chinese society: the Green Dam Girl, rivercrabs, harmony, Internet censorship, cleansing and *Tianxia*.148

This mixing of online lingo and symbols is reiterated also in art off-line. In a 2011 art exhibition at the Postmaster Gallery in New York, Kenneth Tin-Kin Hung exhibited his mixed media installation “The Travelogue of Dr. Brain Damages” (Hung, 2011). The installation was a response to the increasing harmonisation of artistic and netizen dissidence in China, and explored the role of the Internet in facilitating “both freedom and suppression” (Hung, 2011). The Chinese title *Naocan youji* (脑残游记) is a wordplay on *Lao Can youji* (老残游记), “The Travelogue of Lao Can”, a late Qing dynasty novel attacking the injustice and hypocrisy of government officials at the time. The project thus questioned whether the Internet in China is an effective tool for social change, through remixing Chinese netizens’ meme languages with Western icons.

The installation consisted of 10 framed digital prints, a 6-minute long video and a ping-pong table sculpture, seen in the figure below. Several of the prints in this installation include replicas of one or more rivercrabs, often copied from images circulated on blogs. For example, in the piece titled “Justice Bao faces the Red Sun everyday” (天天见红日), *Bao Zheng* (包拯), a Song dynasty judge who is a symbol of justice in China, is holding a laptop of the “Great Firewall” brand displaying a copy of the rivercrab with three watches that was discussed at the beginning of this chapter (Hung, 2011).

On the walls behind the prints were written in large red characters: “You are not a real man until you have leaped the Great Wall of China” (*Bu fan changcheng fei haohan* 不翻长城非好汉), which is one character from the original quote from Mao: “You are not a real man until you have been to the Great Wall of China” (*Bu dao changcheng fei* 不到长城非好汉).

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148 See for example (Hrehnr, 2009b; Stchi, 2009, which later got a avatar dancetroop found at Hrehnr, 2009a; DZS manyin, 2010).
The calligraphic style recalls the hand-painted signs that forbid uncivilised behaviour (like spitting) and promote harmonisation in Chinese cities, but also the signs that appear on walls to be demolished.

Figure 13: “Ping, ping, no pong” artwork by Kenneth Tin-Kin Hung
(Source: Kenneth Tin-King Hung)

The central sculpture of the installation, seen in the figure above, was titled “Ping, ping, no pong” (Ping, ping, wu pong 乒乓无乓) and consisted of a ping-pong table with a whole cut out in the shape of a rivercrab on the Chinese side panel. The net was replaced by a sculptured wall, symbolising the Great Firewall of China, and accompanied by a ping-pong ball to symbolise the exchange of information (Hung, 2011). The sculpture highlights how the purported harmonious “win-win” of mutuality is undermined by harmonisation, in the form of the rivercrab. Through depicting the rivercrab as a clearly visible and distinct hole or void, this installation also highlighted the undecidable nature of rivercrabs as neither present nor absent, but simultaneously both.

The metastasising, hybridising, prostheticising, mutating displacement of harmony 和谐/rivercrabs 河蟹 goes so far as to penetrate and reformulate the very characters themselves, as can be seen in the images below. The mutating of characters into new ones became popular after China’s Ministry of Education unveiled a list of standardised Chinese characters in common usage, including 44 characters that were
slightly revised in their print formats in the Song style, a popular Chinese character style in book printing format (Jiang Aitao, 2009). This re-formation of characters has grown in popularity since 2009, and can be seen in off-line art such as Hung’s (on the ping-pong racket above) and on blogs and webpages on the Internet.149

The image above shows a T-shirt printed by critical blogger Keso. The print displays a rearrangement of the classical Chinese characters, used in Hong Kong and Taiwan, for “rivercrab society” (hexie shehui 河蟹社会). The characters below similarly display an amalgamation of the characters for “harmony” (hexie 和谐) and “rivercrab” (hexie 河蟹).

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149 The first instance of this trend may be when on August 31 2009, netizens created three new Chinese characters together with other digital artwork within twelve hours. These new characters can be seen on Hecaitou’s blog and include a character pronounced “nan”, which combines the characters for “brain damage” (naocan 脑残), which is online lingo used to describe someone incapable of thinking straight because they have been crippled by party ideology; “wao” combining the characters for “fifty cents” (wumao 五毛) in a reference to the “Fifty cent party” which is an online term for online commentators paid and trained by the government to anonymously spin online debate in favour of the Party Line; and “diang”, combining the characters for the CCP Central Committee (dangzhongyang 党中央) interpreted to mean “the ultimate, sacred, absolutely correct, cannot be questioned; you get the shit beaten out of you but cannot say a word” (意思是至高无上的，神圣的，绝对正确的，不容质疑的，抽你丫没商量的) (Hecaitou, 2009b, for English language commentary at China Digital Times, see Xiao Qiang, 2009).
This hybridisation of crabs has clear parallels to Baudrillard's alignment of metastases and prostheses, where the fractal (geo)body, “fated to see its own external functions multiply, is at the same time doomed to unstoppable internal division among its own cells. It metastasises: the internal, biological metastases are in a way symmetrical with those external metastases, the prostheses, the networks, the connections” (Baudrillard, 2002 [2000]: 3). In this way rivercrabs, too, metastasise in time and space.

Heterotemporalities and the undecidability of rivercrabs

Having examined the hybrid nature of the metastasising crabs, the final point I want to argue is that this hybridity, in combination with the autoimmune logics of which they are part, imbues them with a radical undecidability. Derrida too emphasises this link between the autoimmunitary and undecidability: suppression in the name of the (harmonious) system may be legitimate in protecting it from those who threaten it, but is simultaneously autoimmunitary in exposing the immune system by which the system defends itself as an “a priori abusive use of force” (Derrida, 2005 [2003]-a). In this final section I thus want to emphasise the links between cancer/crabs and undecidability of the future against which harmonisation attempts to secure “harmonious world/society”.

The undecidable nature of cancer/crabs is visible in an aspect of the lore surrounding them, that refers to the way the crab moves in time and space, in a forward and backwards motion that has been connected to threatening dishonesty, but also to the inability to decide something one way or the other, or to predict where it is going (Demaitre, 1998). This undecidability embodied in the crab is also emphasised by the Chinese interpretation of harmony that sees its roots in cooking. The crab can at times
be poisonous and as a bottom-feeder it often includes contaminated substances. At the same time, however, it is considered a delicacy and is believed to nourish the marrow and semen, making it a symbol of male potency and virility (The Vanishing Tattoo, 2011). As crabs are considered exemplary “salty” they can in the logic of TCM either disturb or restore harmony of the body through their effect on the kidneys, and can thus cause or treat cancer (Lu, 1986: 52, 125-6; Wong and Sagar, 2010: 16). Like Derrida’s reading of the pharmakon in “Plato’s Pharmacy”, the crab, then, is simultaneously potential poison and potential cure – indeed Derrida says that “[t]he pharmakon is another name, an old name, for this autoimmunitary logic”.150 Again, the interpretation of the crab as alimentary poison/cure as always already central to the concept of harmony can be seen in the building blocks of the harmony concept itself. An alternative explanation of the character 和 reads the radical to the left 禾, which depicts standing grain,152 with the radical to the right 口, which depicts an opening or mouth.153 Together they link harmony to eating, or having plenty of grain 禾 to eat 口.154 David Hall and Roger Ames accordingly argue that “harmony is the art of combining and blending two or more foodstuffs so they come together with mutual benefit and enhancement without losing their separate and particular identities, and yet with the effect of constituting a frictionless whole” (Hall and Ames, 1998: 181, cited in Callahan, 2011: 259). Callahan also draws on this metaphor in a famous passage from the Spring and Autumn Annals (Lüshi chunqiu 吕氏春秋), where a minister uses it to explain to his king the art of empire building: “[y]our state is too

150 For one example of such a cure: “Bake one male crab and one female crab and grind into powder, take the powder with wine all at once to facilitate healing of breast cancer” (Lu, 1986: 126).
151 Derrida (2003a: 124, see also, Derrida, 1976 [1967]: 292; 1981 [1972]: 1995 [1989]-a: 233; Derrida, 2005 [2003]-a: 52, 82, 157). This is also how Chinese lore traditionally conceives of poisons/cures more generally, as is clear from the “Five Poisons” (wu du 王毒), incidentally near-homonymous with “no poison” (wu du 无毒). These are, like the crab, actually five animals that have traditionally been held to counteract harmful influences through counteracting poison with poison. They also had corresponding medicines made from five animals or corresponding herbs, used to treat ulcers and abscesses, probably through active ingredients such as mercury and arsenic (Yetts, 1923: 2; Williams, 1976).
152 According to a dictionary definition (Hanyu da zidian weiyuanhui, 1995: 4.2588.1).
154 This etymology can be found in a number of dictionaries and books on Chinese characters (Wieger, 1965 [1915]: 121a; Karlgren, 1974 [1923]: 70; Lindqvist, 1991: 187; Hanyu da zidian weiyuanhui, 1995: 1.602.1).
small and is inadequate to have the full complement of the necessary ingredients. It is only once you are the Emperor that you would have the full complement” (*Lvshi chunqiu*, 1996, cited in Callahan, 2011: 260). To Callahan, this shows the constructed nature of harmony, built through “an active political process, and judged from a particular perspective – in this case the king’s perspective” (Callahan, 2011: 260).

In Chinese mythology, the crab is similarly associated with sovereign power and violent might, as well as with guarding and screening the passage into secured spaces. For example, in Chinese mythology and popular fiction, the Chrystal Palaces of the Dragon Kings of the Four Seas are guarded by shrimp soldiers and crab generals (Mythical Realm, 2011). This stands as a parallel to the guarding of Chinese sovereign space by the Great Firewall, and the Green Dam Girl with her crab sign of repressive authority. At the same time, however, this crustacean army is parodied in the Chinese idiom of “shrimp soldiers and crab generals” (*xiabing xiejiang* 虾兵蟹将), which is used to denote useless troops, a connotation which remains with contemporary Internet users, as can be seen in the image below, which depicts shrimp soldiers and crab generals as precisely “ineffective troops” (Lee, 2011).

![Figure 16: Shrimp soldiers and crab generals: Ineffective troops (Source: Sean Lee)](image)

Figure 16: Shrimp soldiers and crab generals: Ineffective troops (Source: Sean Lee)
What is clear from these metastases and their association is the undecidability of these crabs of the onco-operative Chinese system. They are simultaneously poison and cure, effective harmonisers and useless troops, a consequence of sovereign bordering of time and space and that which “falls through” or escapes such confines. This undecidability is inseparable from the “mutual contamination” seen above in the crabs’ interaction with their environment and with other species of the zoology that has emerged as part of netizens’ play with humorous homonyms in the face of Internet harmonisation.

It is this “mutual contamination” that I think makes these rivercrabs and their peers step up to the challenge of coeval multiplicities that was outlined in chapter 2 of this thesis, which Hutchings articulated as the attempt to think “heterotemporality” which refers to “ultimately neither one present nor many presents, but a mutual contamination of ‘nows’ that participate in a variety of temporal trajectories, and which do not derive their significance from the one meta-narrative about how they all fit together” (Hutchings, 2008: 166). These différantial metastases, differentiated and deferred through spacing, are of the system yet fall through the cracks of its time and space to engage in a “mutual contamination of ‘nows’” that each incorporates undecidable futures in the “here-now”. Their very undecidability means that we have to take responsibility in the “here-now” for which of their possible readings, or temporal trajectories, we chose to put across. In this chapter I have chosen to put across one such narrative, of crabs as (auto)immune metastases of an onco-operative harmony. Their significance, however, cannot be ultimately decided or locked in by this narrative – it is not a meta-narrative from which we can judge how they all fit together. It is indeed impossible to do justice to the excess of meaning embodied in these crabs. Nonetheless, I have traced some of them here and pointed to some of their significance, in a way that I believe can emphasise their radical undecidability as a “plurality of trajectories” or “simultaneity of stories-so-far”.

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CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explored how Hu’s version of a harmonious world is being challenged and reproduced by a particular form of Chinese *egao* word play that works through deploying official language against itself. These redeployments make visible how Hu’s harmony has come to work through violent “harmonisation” of others. I have argued that these forms of wordplay draw on tactics similar to Derrida’s in particular, but also to Baudrillard’s, thus providing for a resonance here between academic scholarship and dissident practice in China. I have moreover argued that these forms of resistance are inherently linked to Hu’s “harmonious world/society” through the autoimmune logic of what I have termed an onco-operative system: a system that in seeking to protect and cleanse itself actually violates itself as the consequence of a violent non-recognition of the “other” in the self.

In exploring this quasi-suicidal interplay of harmony and rivercrabs, I have shown how they are intimately linked to party-state attempts at spatial and temporal bordering as a means to maintain a cleansed/harmonious timespace. Deconstruction highlights the impossibility of ever making a clear-cut division between inside and outside, self and other and thus brings out a key feature of the logics of “harmonious world” (or perhaps any system). Resistance to harmony/harmonisation can in this way not be thought outside the resistance of harmony/harmonisation, the resistance of the system itself to itself, of and to its “self” as “other”, a resistance of the “other” of itself to itself. For this reason, it is impossible for harmony to acquire the conceptual unity or self-identity which would be needed in order for it to be placed as a secure “object” to be straightforwardly resisted, critiqued or condemned.

In this manner I have insisted on the impossibility of succeeding in creating such a purified space or object, and on the undecidability of both harmony and crabs: like harmony, the crabs are simultaneously poison and cure, they are intimately linked to the possibility of the system in the first place, yet threaten it with murder/suicide. Because of a tendency of any community to close in on itself and exclude the outside on which it relies for survival works according to an autoimmune logic, “[t]his tendency is not a perversion of proper community (whether inoperative, unavowable,
or coming, as for Blanchot, Nancy, Agamben), but the condition of its existence” (Thomson, 2005). This is certainly the case for Hu’s “harmonious world”. In this way “[t]his self-contesting attestation keeps the auto-immune community alive, which is to say, open to something other and more than itself” (Derrida, 1998: 51). Finally, then, I have argued that this undecidability is what makes it possible to think of this onco-operative system of metastases in terms of the “heterotemporalities” or “coeval multiplicities”.

Returning to the question of the political in harmony/rivercrabs, it seems the claim that the online world of egao offers a “free and unrestricted” time and space of Bakhtinian carnival is premature. Rivercrabs are used to circumvent constraints, not abolish them, and constraints are certainly still in place. The descriptions of this culture as a separate sphere or “the antithesis of normal life” seem similarly exaggerated. However, Lagerkvist's idea that egao is for venting anger as opposed to offering the public political power hinges on a focus on politics in the narrow sense, which is seen throughout prior analyses of egao. Much previous scholarship rests on the assumption that egao should be judged on its potential to influence politics, to contest the legitimacy, accountability or policy of the PRC government. Others imply that it should be measured against its potential to cultivate collective resistance, collective empowerment or grassroots communities. If measured against such standards, rivercrabs certainly appear as “ineffective troops” in battling out Chinese politics. They make us laugh, but offer no way out, no alternative telos towards which a movement of mass resistance can be directed. They even refuse to adapt a single meaning and always oscillate – they are simultaneously harmony and rivercrab, resisting and perpetuating the proliferation of harmony.

Precisely herein lies the political potential of rivercrabs. Previous scholarship has aimed to understand the meaning of egao, to pin down its potential significance in terms of a resistance/not resistance divide of politics. I suggest instead that we can approach such phenomena by way of interrogating the political, where “repolitcization” involves a disruption of the regular proliferation of allochronically organized harmony, a “challenge” to “what have, through discursive practices, been
constituted as normal, natural, and accepted ways of carrying on” (Edkins, 1999: 12). Through repeatedly deploying expressions like having “been harmonised” or “rivercrab world” the meaning of the official “harmonious world” discourse is “hollowed out” or “disrupted”, rather than contested head on. The point is not necessarily to resist or not resist, but to “make strange”. This is what pushes rivercrabs into the political, where multiple meanings or doings – of words and purported significance – leads to instances of openness where we need to make “impossible decisions” with regards to their use and interpretation. It is only if we shift the focus from politics to the political that it makes sense to conceive of this language play as “alternative political discourse” (Meng Bingchun, 2011: 39) or “alternate civility” (Lagerkvist, 2010: 158).

With this said, repoliticisation is not stable, but egao too is repeatedly depoliticised, by being designated as unimportant or as meaning only one thing (only revolution, only apolitical escapism, only a potential to become a proper political movement). The point of this chapter is not to designate to egao another correct meaning, but to indicate the undecidability of this meaning-making process. The point, precisely, is to open back up the question of egao as potentially political even if it does not lead to a revolutionary politics.

Because of the onco-operative logic of the system “our solutions to problems, our attempts to perfect the world... are but a step on the way to worse viruses developing” (Coulter, 2004). The question, then, has to be asked: “[w]hat is cancer a resistance to, what even worse eventuality is it saving us from?” (Baudrillard, 1993 [1990]: 10). It is thus to the question of eventualities that I turn in my conclusion, to the (im)possibility of openness to this Other “to come”.
Conclusion: Futures of harmony and coeval multiplicities

Thinking about multiplicity has remained a key conundrum for those who want to think about global politics as truly political. One attempt at managing and grappling with the opportunities and challenges that multiplicity presents us with from “beyond the European imperium” has been recent Chinese thinking about harmony and the concept of “harmonious world” (Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004: ix). This thesis is to be read in the context of recently undertaken efforts to understand this and other normative challenges to the way we imagine the times, spaces and differences of the contemporary world. Its prime task has been to scrutinise the way assumptions about time, space and multiplicity play out in this challenge to what is perceived as Western ways of imagining world order. With such a challenge in mind, this thesis has embarked on a disruptive reading of the multiplicity problematique in the “harmonious world” concept.

THE CONTINUED PROLIFERATION OF HARMONY

Before moving on to discuss the findings of this thesis and their implications for thinking multiplicity, what for the immediate future of harmonious world? The term “harmonious world” has been written into the CCP constitution and numerous official strategy documents. Foreign envoys to the PRC have been taken on Confucius-themed trips by the Chinese state, accompanied by a number of the academic promoters of harmonious world through whom the envoys “acquired a deeper understanding of China’s traditional cultural philosophy such as ‘seeking for harmony but not uniformity’, ‘living in harmony with all other nations’” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2011a). The PRC establishment has also urged other countries to be harmonious, recently for example in relation to Vietnam (Xinhua, 2012d), the Maldives (Xinhua, 2012a) and India (Xinhua, 2012b).

“Harmonious world” has moreover been well received by a number of foreign dignitaries, and spread into their own language use. Leaders who have recently used it in ways that resonate with the sinister side we have seen to harmony include Syrian
President Bashar Al-Assad (CNTV, 2012). At the same time, it has not been given positive play only by alleged “rogues” of the international arena, but by more widely accepted players such as Kevin Rudd, Australia’s former minister of foreign affairs. He confidently declared, in a speech given to the Asia Society in New York in 2012: “there is something in China’s concept of a ‘harmonious world’; which the US, the rest of the region and the rest of the world can work with” (Rudd, 2012). UN officials, such as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, have also promoted harmony in official settings (Xinhua, 2012c). Such endorsement has been played up by Chinese officials, for example Li Baodong, Chinese permanent representative to the UN, who refers to “the spirit of cultural diversity and harmony in the world advocated by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the United Nations” (Xinhua, 2012e).

“Harmonious world” and the traditional strategic culture with which it has been associated, then, has not only been deeply entrenched in PRC policy documents, but has also been given positive play by other influential individuals and organisations. This supports Joseph Cheng’s recent expectation that it will remain a major element of China’s public diplomacy in the foreseeable future: “[a]s China pursues an increasingly ambitious role in regional leadership and international institution-building, its publicity work on building a ‘harmonious world’ will likely be stepped up” (Cheng, 2012: 183).

As explained at the outset of this thesis, every generation of Chinese leadership has used tifa to stamp their mark on Chinese politics. Xi Jinping, who is expected to take over leadership after Hu Jintao in 2012, is not known as a great friend of Hu (he was not Hu’s preferred candidate for succession). We can therefore expect that Xi will introduce other tifa during his time in leadership, and some may expect a decline of “harmonious world” after he comes to power. However, Xi has also made use of the language of harmony in the run-up to his take-over, for example when he headed a large Central Government delegation to the Tibet Autonomous Region Between 17 and 22 July 2011, for events to mark the 60th Anniversary of what the party-state
calls the “peaceful liberation of Tibet”.\footnote{For examples of Xi promoting harmony during the celebration, see the full text (Xi Jinping, 2011a: 2, 3, 4) or a full length CCTV recording (Xi Jinping, 2011b: 12:27, 24:06, 33:24) of his speech at the anniversary ceremony. Xi’s speech was also preceded by others stressing civilizational harmony (wenming hexie 文明和谐), and followed by a parade displaying ethnic harmony and unity under the theme “building harmony”, as can be seen in additional CCTV recordings of the ceremony. The broadcast ends by an assertion of the expected harmonious life of ethnic unity under the central government (CCTV, 2011: 19:19, 20:20, 138:50, 147:14).} Moreover, he was responsible for the inauguration ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, where harmony played a central role. For these reasons, it seems reasonable to expect that Hu’s stepping down from the presidency is not the last we will hear of harmonious world in Chinese policy or academic discourse (see Nordin, 2011: 17).

The cat-and-mouse game with online dissidents also continues. A search for banned terms on Sina Weibo on 2 November 2011 showed the term “蟹农场” (xienongchang) to be censored. The term refers to a series of political cartoons with the English name “Hexie farm”. This “hexie” refers to the double meaning of harmony and rivercrabs, with the Chinese title using the term for “crab” (xie 蟹) in this formulation. The cartoons focus on censorship and violent promotion of harmonious policies and have become widespread amongst other things through the China Digital Times project (Hernandez, 2011; Hexie Farm, 2011). New puns are constantly created, then censored, giving rise to further new terms. The rivercrabs have now morphed into new humorous “national treasure” words that are deployed in egao culture online. One such replacement word for harmony/rivercrabs is shuichan (水产), meaning “aquatic product”. Another is the evocative near-homonym hēxiē or hēxuè (喝血), which means to “drink blood”, an expression particularly popular in Taiwan. Through such terms, harmony/rivercrabs continue to morph, metastasise and proliferate.

In my examination of what “harmonious world” does in terms of imagining time space and multiplicity, I set out in this thesis to answer three sub-questions. I will now return to each of these questions in turn, and will make three key claims with regards to the doings of harmony.
“HARMONIOUS WORLD” REPEATS AN ALLOCHRONISING LOGIC

The first question I asked in the introduction to this thesis was: what are the assumptions behind and political consequences of different ways of articulating “harmonious world”, particularly in terms of ordering time and space? With regards to this question, this thesis has found that much of the official and academic discourse on harmonious world deploys terms drawn from ancient Chinese thought. We have seen particular emphasis on concepts drawn from pre-Qin texts, such as “All-under heaven” (Tianxia 天下), “the kingly way” (wangdao 王道), “the hegemonic way” (badao 霸道), “harmonism” (hehe zhuyi 合和主义), and so on. Yet, in the texts I have examined on “harmonious world”, these terms are aligned with concepts of traditional “Western” IR and fall back on the spatial categories of traditional IR theories.

Through these spatial categories, the debates reflect different ways of imagining the space of a harmonious world. Some articulations rely on a unit-based political cosmology, including civilizations, regions and most of all bounded states. Others are based in holistic assumptions, deploying IR-terms such as “network space”, holistic globalisation (specifically quanqiu yitihua 全球一体化) and an understanding of Tianxia that similarly conceives of a space where everything is already connected to everything else. Both of these ways of imagining space, however, marry their spatialisations with conventional notions of modernization and progress, or “turning the bad into the good”, that imply a linear or teleological time. Such imaginations organise difference in epochs, and binaries such as advanced/behind, modern/traditional, developed/developing and bad/good. Through these concepts multiplicity is aligned in a historical queue with Chinese elites at the head. I have shown these terms and spatio-temporal imaginings to reappear in party-state documents, academic writing and the visualisations of harmonious world at Expo 2010.

In all these contexts, I have shown some of the things “harmonious world” does at the level of ideology, as a second order simulacrum. At this level, the key “doing” of harmonious world in the contexts I examined is the allochronic organisation of time, space and multiplicity. This is politically problematic because it reduces not only the
challenge, but the opportunity that time and space could and should present us with: coeval multiplicities.

This thesis thus presents a rebuttal of claims that “harmonious world” and associated concepts such as “All-under-heaven” and “the kingly way” present a better alternative to more conventional ideas of world order. Despite claims to the contrary, they fail to escape the problematic organisation of difference that they criticise in “Western thought”. Through examining the unit-based and holistic political cosmologies in academic discourse and at Expo 2010 I have moreover contributed to a rebuttal of the idea that these two imaginaries are mutually exclusive with one replacing the other. I have shown instead that they are both deployed together in contemporary China in ways that, although in certain tension, are mutually supportive in underpinning an allochronic world imaginary. Therefore, although there is some tension between different terms and spatialisations used to articulate harmonious world, the diversity of accounts is undermined in that they all fall back on allochronising assumptions. In that sense, what they all do is produce a domesticated form of difference that denies an open future.

Through these findings this thesis intervenes in two fields. For students of China and its foreign policy, it provides a rebuttal of some important claims by Chinese scholars and policy makers. The most important implication is that scholars must stop treating China as the “other country”. China is not “behind” as some infant being socialised, as Johnston and others would have it. Nor is it a radical other to “the West” that naturally escapes the problems of allochronic thought, as in Chinese exceptionalist narratives. For scholars interested in time, space and multiplicity in IR, and in the allochrony problematique in particular, this thesis provides a detailed study of a concept from China, a context that has hitherto received less attention in these debates than it merits. For these debates, it cautions against the allure of China as an Other or alternative that escapes the traps of allochronic thinking.
HARMONISATION WILL NOT TAKE PLACE

The second question I asked in the introduction to this thesis was: what is the overall effect of the proliferation of “harmony” in contemporary Chinese society? After officially launching “harmonious world” in 2005, the PRC party-state has continued spurring the concept’s proliferation in Chinese and international contexts. Through the studies of this thesis we have seen “harmonious world” amass so much meaning that the possibility of using it as a meaningful concept has disappeared. Its meaning has been shown to designate total co-operation, total subjugation, total respect for difference, total control, totally moral leadership, and so on. Where other scholars have tried to find out its true meaning, I have shown instead how the illusion of this possibility has disappeared – not into meaninglessness, but into what we may by Baudrillaradanean analogy think of as transparent or obscene “hyper-meaning”, the more meaningful than the meaningful. As an effect of this mass proliferation the term has become overripe and collapsed under the weight of its own meaning to the point where it can no longer function as an ideal. The fantasy and the reality of harmonious world have collapsed into one another and the seduction of the concept has been lost. The proliferation of harmony has made it disappear as an imagined metaphysical possibility. Harmonization has not taken place, is not taking place and will not take place. This effect of the proliferation of harmony, as a third order simulacrum of simulation rather than second order ideology, is a key finding.

Some scholars have called for caution with regards to the oppressive, homogenising and depoliticising aspect of Chinese harmonization. In the context of its “hyper-meaning”, resistance to harmony and harmonious world must be thought of differently. The threat posed by proliferating harmonisation is not only the policing of boundaries that I describe on the level of ideology: cracking down on dissidents, blocking words online, preventing people from tweeting. Indeed, we might want to reflect on why many of us are so obsessed with condemning the limitation of communication: will the revolution really be tweeted? Instead, a more spectacular threat to harmony comes from the excess of communicating harmony itself, which destroys the illusion of the real in the harmony concept. In that sense the mass-
communication of harmony is dangerous on a larger metaphysical plane. The CCP is working towards a controlled hierarchical harmony, but it becomes something completely different. They are the ones robbing harmony of its illusion.

Baudrillard writes concerning the Gulf War – which he famously declared was not taking place – that it is stupid to be for or against the war if you do not for one moment question its credibility or level of reality (Baudrillard, 1991). Therefore, those who promote the truth of it as a war and historical event are the warmongers, the accomplices (Baudrillard, 1991; Merrin, 1994: 440). On the same logic, it is misplaced to be for or against harmony. We have seen various aspects of the “hyper-meaning” of harmony and harmonisation (total co-operation, total subjugation, total respect for difference, totally moral leadership, total control). None of these things are taking place in contemporary China or its relations to the world. If something is taking place, it is not harmony or harmonisation. My task here has not been to promote or oppose this term, but rather to question its credibility and indeed level of reality. This insight and its implications for resistance is a key contribution of this thesis to both of the fields in which I intervene. Moreover, through reading “harmonious world” in terms of both its doing and its undoing this thesis suggests a novel way in which scholars of Chinese international relations may study foreign policy concepts in general and Chinese set phrases in particular. It thus contributes to the literatures on “doing things with words” in Chinese politics through emphasising ways of examining the undoings that doings necessarily imply. It moreover contributes to literatures on time, space and multiplicity in IR through showing how the thought of Derrida and Baudrillard may help us shake up the manner in which questions of multiplicity and politics can be formulated, and foreign policy concepts can be studied in terms of excess.

That harmony is not taking place, I stress once more, does not mean it does not have effects. Two academic commentators claim with regards to its policy formulation that “it is implicit that a harmonious world is one where supposed ‘heresies’ are tolerated” (Guo Sujian and Blanchard, 2008b: 4). Based on the finding that harmonious world repeats an allochronising logic, I am less certain that such tolerance is implied in
harmonious world. Relegating “heresies” (or “others”) to a different time from our own means denying them coevalness in the here-now. The implication in the texts I have examined is that “they” will eventually come around to seeing the world as “we” do, which in turn has depoliticising effects.

THERE IS AN APORTIA AT THE HEART OF HARMONIOUS WORLD AND COEVAL MULTIPLICITIES

The third and final question I asked in the introduction to this thesis was: are there contradictions in or between different articulations of “harmonious world”? How are these made visible? I have argued above that the diversity of more or less official accounts of a harmonious world is undermined in that they all fall back on allochronising assumptions. However, I have also shown how official language migrates and morphs in different contexts through which “harmonious world” is undone – resisted, deconstructed and changed – by its very own logic. A reading of China’s mega events as simulacra of both the second and third order (ideology and simulation) has revealed how notions of inside/outside, now/then and subject/object come apart. Moreover, dissident play with the concept of harmony makes visible certain contradictions, both between different articulations of harmonious world and within the concept itself.

I began this thesis by outlining the two contradictory imperatives of multiplicity, the threat and the promise of difference. Throughout the examination of harmonious world, this term has revealed itself as mirroring the aporetic imperatives of coeval multiplicity. Harmony must by definition be universal, but its universalisation by definition makes harmony impossible. Bart Rockman has suggested that harmony may be a “necessary glue without which neither a society nor a polity are sustainable”, but that “complete social harmony is ultimately suffocating and illiberal” (Rockman, 2010: 207). Jacob Torfing has also taken issue with predominant understandings of harmony in Southeast Asia that he argues present a “post-political vision of politics and governance that tends to eliminate power and antagonism” (Torfing, 2010: 257). Drawing on Laclau and Mouffe, he understands such a post-political vision as both theoretically unsustainable and politically dangerous. It is theoretically unsustainable
because power and antagonism are inevitable features of the political dimensions of politics, as I have described the political (cf. Baudrillard, 1990 [1983]: 162, 182). Therefore politics:

cannot be reduced to a question of translating diverging interests into effective [win-win] policy solutions, since that can be done in an entirely depoliticized fashion, for example, by applying a particular decision-making rule, relying on a certain rationality or appealing to a set of undisputed virtues and values. Of course, politics always invokes particular rules, rationalities and values, but the political dimension of politics is precisely what escapes all this (Torfing, 2010: 257-8).

Politics, then, unavoidably involves a choice that means eliminating alternative options. Moreover, although we base our decisions on reasons and may have strong motivations for choosing what we choose, we will never be able to provide an ultimate ground for any given choice – in Derridean terms, such grounds will always be indefinitely deferred. Therefore, “the ultimate decision will have to rely on a skilful combination of rhetorical strategies and the use of force” (Torfing, 2010: 258). The acts of exclusion that politics necessarily entails will produce antagonism between those who identify with the included options and those who do not. For this reason, the attempt by the promoters of harmony to dissociate harmonious politics from the exercise of power, force and the production of antagonism, claiming a harmony where everyone wins and no-one looses, is bound to fail.

Moreover, the post-political vision of politics and harmony is politically dangerous because its denial of antagonism will tend to alienate those excluded from consideration – those who count as “no-one” when everyone wins and no-one loses. This, Torfing writes, will tend to displace antagonistic struggles from the realm of the political to the realm of morals, “where conflicts are based on non-negotiable values and the manifestation of ‘authentic’ identities” (Torfing, 2010: 258). Such non-negotiable values would be the opposite of the co-operative harmony sought.

To both Rockman and Torfing, then, complete or perfect harmony will defeat harmony and create disharmony. We have seen how numerous scholars argue that in order to imagine harmony, we need to imagine heterogeneity and multiplicity. We can now
add that the allochronic organisation of difference eliminates the multiplicity in the here-now that is a prerequisite for harmony. In order to imagine heterogeneity and multiplicity we need to delineate here and there, now and then in the fathomable aspect of différenciation that enables us to think spacing between multiple trajectories à la Massey. In other words, in order to imagine multiplicity we need borders and boundaries, or else all we have is the unitary One. Such is language.

Rockman goes on to argue that although homogeneity of ascriptive identities like ethnicity, language or religion may enhance harmony, the more important factor for constructing harmony is “the capacity to assimilate, absorb and integrate perspectives to a common ground for accommodation of diversity” (Rockman, 2010: 207). But the point is that the idea of a “common ground” can only be built on exclusion, that such assimilation, absorption and integration is what reduces the otherness of the Other to only fathomable, definable and co-operative difference.

To Baudrillard, it is the modern West’s refusal of such alterity that spawns nostalgia for the Other, who is now always already domesticated, a mass version of what we saw in presentations of “ethnics” at Expo 2010 (Baudrillard, 1990 [1987]: 145, 165). We have seen the same refusal of alterity in Chinese discourses on harmonious world, with its focus on proper understanding and the insistence on difference in order to make the world “colourful”. It is the same nostalgia and exhuming ritual that IR scholars perform when dreaming of an emerging “Chinese school” of IR theory as a radical alternative to “the West”. Despite this nostalgia, we must not try to “foster” difference. It is counterproductive to call for “respecting the difference” of “marginalized groups”, as this relies on a presumption that they need to have an identity and makes the marginal valued as such, thus leaving the marginal where they are, “in place”. Difference must therefore be rejected, to some extent at least, in favour of greater otherness or alterity: “otherness [l’altérité] is not the same thing as difference. One might even say that difference is what destroys otherness” (Baudrillard, 1993 [1990]: 127, 131).

Thus “the other must stay Other, separate, perhaps difficult to understand, uncontrollable” (Hegarty, 2004: 118). In this way, Baudrillard advocates more
“exoticism”, an interest in the other as Other, and as beyond assimilation into “proper understanding” in the present. To Hutchings this absence of a “proper understanding” of the other in the present is no doubt disappointing, because other times are indeed identified with an unpresentable supplement and thus with that which cannot be known, but only hoped for. But the Other can only remain Other insofar as we resist the urge to attempt such assimilation. The alternative would be to fall back into “the One” and loose sight of the possibility of harmony and coeval multiplicities.

What we have, then, is an aporia at the heart of both coeval multiplicities and of harmonious world, despite attempts to conceal it. I have aimed through this thesis to question little by little the attempts at harmonious organisation of time and space as belonging to the sovereign that this concealment has implied. I have examined different strategies of reading and using “harmony” in ways that reveal the excluded other of Hu’s harmony – discord and competition – to be always already there within the political and linguistic system of harmony itself. I have argued that the harmonious system is not based on co-operation or non co-operation, but works according to an onco-operative logic: the quasi-suicidal logic of cancer and the (auto)immune. Ultimately, the aim and most important contribution of this thesis has been to bring the onco-operative uncertainty of the political back into the harmonious world concept in order to elucidate the negotiation of danger and necessity of multiplicity.

(IM)POSSIBLE COEVAL MULTIPLICITIES; (IM)POSSIBLE HARMONY

With regards to the main question of this thesis, I thus make three interrelated claims about what “harmonious world” does. First, it repeats the allochronising logic that we recognise from “Western” discourses. Second, it disappears as an imagined metaphysical possibility as an effect of its excessive proliferation. Third, when the aporia at the heart of the harmony concept is recognised, it allows for a re-politicisation of “harmonious world” and China’s role in world politics. I have argued that these findings make an important contribution to both scholars of Chinese
international politics and to theorists of time, space and multiplicity in IR. But where does this leave us?

A key effect of the onco-operative logic that I have identified in “harmonious world” is undecidability. Harmony, as simulation, is paradoxically both totalising and violent, and impossible (cf. Grace, 2003). To begin, its fetishised perfectability is constantly undermined:

[t]he perfect crime would be to build a world-machine without defect, and to leave it without traces. But it never succeeds. We leave traces everywhere – viruses, lapses, germs, catastrophes – signs of defect, or imperfection (Baudrillard, 1997: 24).

Moreover, contemplating the illusion of the real reveals the object as neither the static, subordinated other of the subject, nor the simulated project of an idealist order: the object that is neither one thing nor the other is fundamentally illusory (Grace, 2003). In Baudrillard’s terms:

[i]llusion is simply the fact that nothing is itself, nothing means what it appears to mean. There is a kind of inner absence of everything to itself. That is illusion. It is where we can never get hold of things as they are, where we can never know the truth about objects, or the other (Baudrillard in Baudrillard and Butler, 1997: 49).

Undecidables, then, cannot be reduced to opposition but reside within opposition, in Derrida’s words “resisting and disorganising it, without ever constituting a third term” and thus without becoming dialectical (Derrida, 1987 [1972]: 43, emphasis in original). Such undecidables exist neither simply inside metaphysical discourse and its constitutive binaries, nor simply outside them. They work, instead, on their margins and limits, disrupting and displacing them, as we have seen rivercrabs do. This makes them “[n]either/nor, that is, simultaneously, either/or” (Derrida, 1987 [1972]: 43, emphasis in original).

We can add to the previous discussion about the times and spaces of undecidable harmony, and the potential I have located in it for thinking coeval multiplicities, through drawing on Derrida’s discussion of auto-immunity in relation to the term
renvoyer, which means re-sending, sending away, sending back (to the source) and/or sending on (Haddad, 2004: 37). Derrida explains that the autoimmune process:

consists always in a renvoi, a referral or deferral, a sending or putting off. The figure of the renvoi belongs to the schema of space and time, to what I had thematized with such insistence long ago under the name spacing as the becoming-space of time or the becoming-time of space. The values of the trace or of the renvoi, like those of différance, are inseparable from it (Derrida, 2005 [2003]-a: 35, emphasis in original).

Thus, in onco-operative harmony the (auto)immune topology in space demands that harmony be sent off elsewhere, excluded, rejected. It must be expelled under the pretext of protecting it, precisely by rejecting or sending off to the outside the disharmonious elements inside it (cf. Derrida, 2005 [2003]-a: 35-6). As we have seen, such exiling does not take place only in democracy, as Derrida implied, but also in harmony. It is the expulsion of internal ills that has been promoted by Hu's harmony and by both Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and biomedical approaches to cancer. It has been criticised by theorists of time and space such as Fabian, Inayatullah and Blaney, Massey and Hutchings. Moreover, “since the renvoi operates in time as well, autoimmunity also calls for putting off [renvoyer] until later elections and the advent of democracy” (Derrida, 2005 [2003]-a: 36). So too does it postpone the coming of harmony. Here, truly “harmonious” behaviour by the sovereign is postponed until later, until more harmonious times. China needs to become strong first, be in control of harmony on the inside first, use hard power first. This renvoi reinforces my claim that there is no essence to harmony, no self with which harmony can be self-same. To paraphrase Derrida, this double renvoi (sending off – or to – the other and putting off, adjournment) is an autoimmune fatality or necessity. It is inscribed directly in harmony, directly in or right onto the concept of a harmony without concept, directly in a harmony devoid of self-sameness. It is a harmony of which the concept remains free, out of gear, free-wheeling, in the free play of its indetermination. It is inscribed directly in this thing or this cause that, precisely under the name of harmony, is never properly what it is, never itself. For what is lacking in harmony is proper meaning, the very meaning of the selfsame, the it-self, the properly selvesame of the it-self. It defines harmony, and the very ideal of harmony, by this lack
of the proper and of the selfsame (cf. Derrida, 2003b: 61; 2005 [2003]-a: 36-7). Again, in a slightly different sense, harmony has not taken place, is not taking place and will not take place.

The onco-operative Chinese system is not only a process by which harmony attacks a part of itself. This renvoi, moreover, consists in a deferral or referral to the other:

as the undeniable, and I underscore undeniable, experience of the alterity of the other, of heterogeneity, of the singular, the not-same, the different, the dissymmetric, the heteronomous (Derrida, 2005 [2003]-a: 38, emphasis in original).

By undeniable, here, Derrida also means that it is only deniable. The only way that it is possible to protect meaning is through a sending-off (renvoi) by way of denial. Harmony is differential in both senses of différence. It is différence, renvoi, and spacing. This is why spacing, “the becoming-space of time or the becoming-time of space” is so important. (Derrida, 2005 [2003]-a: 38). Harmony, like democracy, is what it is only in the différence by which it defers itself and differs from itself. Harmony can never achieve the indivisibility that it claims as its prerequisite. To the extent that it tries to do so, it must enforce its law with violence (disharmony). In this sense, it is impossible.

But, the perceptive reader may ask, do the traces and cracks that make harmony come apart not also appear in the argument of this thesis? Could the same not be said about the argument that harmony is impossible? Indeed. A successful failure. And the same is true for “coeval multiplicities”. This thesis has questioned whether it is possible to imagine harmonious world in a way that allows for coeval multiplicities. The temptation set up by this question is to answer in terms of the dichotomy it implies: it is either possible, or impossible.

However, the undoing of “harmonious world” I have examined exposes the need to think otherwise about the dichotomy of possibility/impossibility and to displace it. Following Derrida, both “harmonious world” and “coeval multiplicity” are best conceived as both possible and impossible, never simply one or the other. Any harmonious or coeval relation to otherness is also always a disharmonious and
allochronising relation. This deconstructive undecidability, as I have argued, is not negative (as Massey would have it). That harmony or coeval multiplicities are not simply possible is not an excuse to treat them as simply impossible. The aim of reading deconstruction or reversibility throughout this thesis has been to reveal the contradictions and complexity that reside within what we try to enact and make possible. The purpose has been to show that the post-political articulations of “harmonious world” do not hold up, and to bring the political back into the harmony concept.

**COEVAL MULTIPLICITIES AND HARMONY TO COME**

I have argued that harmonious world will not take place, I have argued against its possibility, I have used it against itself, and written an entire thesis with the express strategy to make it disappear. Are scholars then to resolutely reject harmony and harmonious world as viable concepts in IR? Are students to retreat back to the comfortable concepts and language that have a more established history in IR literatures?

Although it may appear paradoxical, I want to answer these questions with a resolute “no”. Again: that harmony or coeval multiplicities are not simply possible is not an excuse to treat them as simply impossible. It calls, instead, for the opposite of abandoning harmony and coeval multiplicities. The point that harmonious world is not uniquely liberating, but repeats the politically problematic and allochronising logic of more established writing in what is referred to as ”Western tradition”, simply means that it cannot escape the restraints and problems recognisable in other terms. Therefore, retreating to other (old, comfortable) terms is not a solution. There are, however, some good reasons to continue discussing harmony and harmonious world as important concepts of IR.

First, although harmony has disappeared its proliferation has not. As explained above, I believe that harmonious world will remain a key concept to Chinese politics for some time yet. This in itself means we should keep engaging it.
Second, I use it in acknowledgement of a tradition and aspiration to a way of doing things differently. Derrida’s “democracy to come” is chosen in acknowledgement of his debt to a historical and intellectual heritage. As he claims in an interview concerning autoimmunity:

[o]f all the names grouped a bit too quickly under the category ‘political regimes’ (and I do not believe that ‘democracy’ ultimately designates a ‘political regime’), the inherited concept of democracy is the only one that welcomes the possibility of being contested, of contesting itself, of criticizing and indefinitely improving itself (Derrida, 2003a: 121).

I have shown that Derrida’s claim that “democracy would be the name of the only ‘regime’ that presupposes its own perfectibility” is highly questionable (Derrida, 2003a: 121). There seems to be little impetus to call the processes and ideas that I have examined “democracy” (despite the CCP leadership’s insistence that China is democratic). Yet, they operate on the same (auto)immune or onco-operative logic that Derrida takes as giving “democracy” its future, its “to come”. I have argued that “harmony” is onco-operative in a similar manner, and its legacy should be recognised.

Third, I want to retain the term “harmony” because of its universalist implications (cf. Pin-Fat, 2010: 119-20). Its universal claim that all conceivable elements of a situation need to be in harmony for the situation to be harmonious conjures up the question of exclusions and exceptions. Despite itself, it invites questions about what or who has been excluded, why and on what grounds. I therefore take it as an invitation to question and challenge the reality, precisely, of the divisions that deployments of harmony have made visible to us.

In the party-state's version of harmony, China’s future is an active programme, but importantly this future is described through the oxymoron of “inevitable choice” (State Council of the PRC, 2005b), legitimised as rational due to the application of China’s “scientific outlook on development” and prescriptive of a future where China will always stand for “fairness and justice” (Hu Jintao, 2007). I have questioned such prescriptive narratives, in order to open up to the undecidability of an unimaginable future for harmonious world.
The reason that I have kept insisting on such openness (autoimmunity, undecidability, the Other, and so on) is because it makes the political, and indeed any futures at all, imaginable (albeit in ways I shall qualify below). To Derrida “[a] foreseen event is already present, already presentable; it has already arrived or happened and is thus neutralized in its irruption” (Derrida, 2005 [2003]-b: 143). Therefore, “[w]ithout the absolute singularity of the incalculable and the exceptional, no thing and no one, nothing other and thus nothing, arrives or happens” (Derrida, 2005 [2003]-b: 148, emphasis in original). And again, “[w]ithout autoimmunity, with absolute immunity, nothing would ever happen or arrive; we would no longer wait, await or expect, no longer expect one another, or expect any event” (Derrida, 2005 [2003]-b: 152, see also 157). This is why Derrida insists on the future “to come” (venir/à venir). In accordance with my argument for (im)possible coeval multiplicities, this places focus on what comes, rather than that which begins from the self or the One. Chinese language has the same connotations of the future as that which comes, where the character lai 来, meaning precisely “to come”, is part of the term for future, weilai 未来. This places it in a chain of meanings of the “to come” as “future” (weilai 未来 or jianglai 将来), “return” (huilai 回来), and “originally” (yuanlai 原来). This echoes with the spectral temporality discussed in this thesis, where the future is to come as a return of the other that is also its (non)origin. As we have seen weilai, the future, was itself harmonised in conjunction with Ai Weiwei’s detention, making it deferred in more than one sense.

Through these ways of rethinking harmony, we see how the undecidability at work in the very concepts of harmony and coeval multiplicities leaves open the chance (or threat) of a future, for both the terms themselves and for responsibility and singular decisions to be taken beyond masterful sovereignty. This future is not just in the future, something we can hope for, but it imposes itself with absolute urgency in the form (or form-beyond-form) that the imperative of harmony takes here and now. Because of its onco-operative (im)possible character, “harmony” is structurally open to the other – an other that does not await us as the unified ideal of a programmable
or predictable future, but that presses upon us (with all the force of its self-difference) in the “here-now” (cf. Wortham, 2010: 131-2; Derrida, 1994).

My point of retaining the (im)possibility of a harmony to come is partly about retaining the term “harmony”, but it is also about opening up to the possibility of its continued destruction. By opening itself up to the other, harmony threatens to further destroy itself, but also gives it the chance to receive the other – in the here-now, in coeval multiplicity. The point of the “to come” is a future that cannot be identified in advance, since it would break with all the old names. Without countries, civilizations, progress, we may ask whether it would still make sense to speak of harmonious world under that name, or indeed of coeval multiplicities in world politics. As a term, then, “harmony” is not sacred, neither is “coeval multiplicity”. Some other context, some day, may demand that we use a different word in other sentences (cf. Derrida, 2002: 181). Just as the PRC state (or indeed any state) works on an onco-operative logic, so too does language attempt to remain immune to anything that may threaten its logical syntax. This is a necessity for language to make sense. The definition of a term, by definition, is a border and immune protection from what it is not, but we can read its simultaneous auto-immunity through reading deconstruction. Therefore, at the same time as the future is unpredictable, it is at work today, in onco-operative harmony and coeval multiplicities: it is what is coming, what is happening. The responsibility for what remains to be decided or done cannot consist in following rules, rites or proper conduct of harmony, nor in a prescriptive theory for how to think and write coeval multiplicities, but must remain within the realm of the political.


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