

Chee Productions & Berlin Massive

Report on EU-China Twinning Program

Zhiqi Yang, Chee Productions, Guangzhou, China
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Chee Productions and Berlin Massive both are non-profit organizations operating in the field of urban youth cultures and already have successfully implemented several projects in the past.

Despite their joint activities cooperation still proves to be a recurring challenge. This is especially due to the lack of understanding of each others' working environment and logistic problems. The Twinning program gave the two organizations the unique opportunity to better understand each others' working background and working procedures – without the usual pressure of time.

Dickid aka Zhiqi Yang, Chee Productions

Between 01st September and 29th September 2013, Dickid was working at Berlin Massive e.V. in Berlin as a part of the EU- China NGO-Twinning Program.

Dickid came to Berlin with the **objections** to learn more about hip hop culture in Germany and especially how organizations are embedded in the German administration. He wanted to learn from the German partner about social participation.

Moreover, he wanted to establish a long-term relationship with Berlin Massive.

4 weeks in Berlin: Or how Dickid got to know the German administration machinery

We found for Dickid a private accommodation so he had a chance to get to know every day life in Germany's capital Berlin, from grocery shopping to public transport. There are a lot more rules for the daily routine in Germany in comparison to China, for example shops' short opening hours, Sunday rest or the no-smoking rule.

At Berlin Massive

Berlin Massive is part of a network of urban artists, designers and volunteers in the field of urban culture since 2006. It offers artistic workshops and cultural youth education, all with an intercultural perspective. It puts high emphasis on the mutual learning opportunities that arise through artistic dialogue.

During his time with Berlin Massive Dickid was able to gain a better understanding of how cultural youth education is defined in Germany, of our networking, fundraising and how our work is affected by an enormous amount of administrative rules and regulations. He was surprised how much qualification is demanded of employees and their methods. Terms like inclusion, gender mainstreaming or participation in planning and decision-making processes have rather low importance in China.

He learned from us how financial support programs are structured in Germany and which administrative guidelines have to be followed. Bureaucratic preparations for youth cultural

events and workshops were new to him. He also gathered insights into accounting for associations, the role of protection of children and young adults and got a deep impression of the diversity of methods in the work with young people.

Especially our use of hip hop as a method for non-verbal learning as integral part of school teaching took his interest.

Learning by experience

We find learning by experience very important. That is why we took Dickid to see a variety of projects so he could get to know a great range of different working methods. He learned how youth culture work is defined in Germany, what kind of funding opportunities there exists, how the actors are networked and how, in his view, the enormous regulatory and administrative rules and regulations guide the work of German NGOs in the cultural area.

We visited projects in Minden, Wiesbaden and Frankfurt a.M., met up with music projects, artists and decision makers at the Berlin Musik Week, set up a network meeting at Hip Hop Stützpunkt and began the planning for a German-Chinese hip hop exchange in 2014.

Dickid also participated in a meeting of the *Graffiti Lobby Berlin* during which artists, protagonists of the creative economy and youth culture supported the idea to fight for legalizing graffiti and create legal walls in Berlin. He got an impression on how the civil society works in Germany and how participants are integrated in the planning and decision-making processes.

Conclusion and future

Dickid thinks his stay in Germany, his newly acquired knowledge and new contacts will be a big help for future projects with countries from the EU region.

Moreover, all the experiences encouraged him to approach institutions and authorities in China to ask for support for future projects. He already managed to arrange a Chinese-German meeting between young hip hop artists in 2014 in cooperation with the Guangzhou Youth Culture Department

Akim Walta, Berlin Massive e.V.

Between 24th September and 10th November 2013, Akim was working at Chee Productions in Beijing as a part of the EU-China NGO-Twinning Program.

His **objectives** were to learn more about hip hop culture in China and how Chinese NGOs work. He also wanted to get in touch with new organizations and arrange meetings for future cooperation.

Akim Walta (Hip Hop Stützpunkt) / Berlin Massive e.V. in China

Akim Walta has been involved in Hip Hop and Urban Art for almost three decades. He has gathered plenty of experience on projects both with and on China. The exchange, however, was a unique possibility for him to gain a better understanding of Chinese NGO's working methods without the usual lack of time.

In addition to working with Chee productions on their projects he was also able to meet potential new partners, among them the former director of cultural affairs of Beijing city, a preparatory meeting with the Guangzhou youth bureau on a planned youth exchange and with the Guangdong Youth Federation.

At Chee Productions

Apart from several new encounters in different cities, workshops and youth cultural events Akim Walta had the opportunity to get to know daily work of a NGO at Chee Productions. From his point of view their work is a lot less planned and organized than in Germany. In China they have less paper work since they communicate over social networks. A lot of things appear not to be regulated or on short notice and spontaneously planned with partners and in the networks.

In contrast there seems to be a lot more social engagement by volunteers than in Germany. Many projects have been successfully realized on low budget and with much improvisation.

Different and similar approaches to urban and youth culture

Akim found that for the large state-associated Youth federations urban and youth cultures are not of great importance – yet. They rather focus on services and support for young people, such as assisting young job-seekers or protecting childrens' rights. The Youth Federations' so called "Youth Palaces" offer young people a large variety of activities: from music to sports and arts & crafts.

But he discovered that the Youth Federation delegates were very much interested in the work of Chee productions and Berlin Massive as well as in joint future projects – especially with regard to equal opportunities for young people with different backgrounds.

In contrast to the state-run federations Independent organizations working in the field of cultural youth education have very little funding but work with highly motivated volunteers. One's own initiative is absolutely crucial but often leads to very creative activities and

fundraising solutions. Independent organizations are generally well connected with each other and in their work there is surprisingly little interference by state actors.

Conclusion and future

Despite successful German-Chinese projects the organization of such measures are always a challenge: language barriers, lack of knowledge of the structures and ways of working in the other country, logistical challenges, and finally the regulatory differences between the two different political systems scare presumably many from initiating cooperation projects. In the first place, however, the missing opportunities to ever come into contact are the main reason for missing cooperation projects. In the economic sphere, there is wide support for German companies to become involved in China. In the field of culture, education and youth work, there is no such a strong support. In this respect, the Twinning Program offered a unique opportunity. Without the usual time and organizational pressure, we were able to look behind the scenes, to get to know the other country, and become acquainted with the work of our partner NGO.

All of my expectations were met. Not only did he have the opportunity to get to know the working methods of Chee Productions but was also able to arrange meetings with actors and decision makers in the youth sector in order to initiate new projects.

Both organizations view the Twinning exchange as a very much appreciated opportunity to leverage their cooperation towards a more professional level, share experience and learn from each other.

More detailed information is given in the long reports of the twinningers. Anyone interested can contact the Stiftung Asienhaus staff/China program to receive more information.