

## Harmonious Society, Civil Society and the Media: A Communicative Action Perspective

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**Abstract:** Scholarly interest in Jurgen Habermas's work has been growing in China for some years. Mostly, this interest is reflected in studies of the concept of the political public sphere. These studies ask whether the kind of political speech enacted in the public sphere is relevant to the context of Chinese society and history. This paper inquires into the relevance of the category of the public sphere for analyzing cultural change. The public sphere is connected with two other categories, i.e. the lifeworld and lifeworld colonization. First the public sphere is treated as a space not only for discussion of political matters but also for discussion of cultural norms and preferences, as a space for the society to reflect on the values of a Harmonious Society. Second, the colonization thesis holds that market forces can have a corrosive effect on culture if markets are not adequately managed, leading to alienation, anomie, and cultural impoverishment. In Habermas's view these problems are already advanced in America, Germany, and other Western societies. The paper concludes by suggesting that the threat of lifeworld colonization should perhaps be monitored and analyzed in China too. [China Media Research. 2008; 4(4): 31-38]

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China's media infrastructure is modernizing rapidly, including its Internet, and is producing something like a public sphere. However, some observers feel that the growing public sphere threatens Confucian cultural traditions by disturbing social harmony. Chinese political leadership is interested in modernization and democracy, but would prefer a Chinese styled modernization and Chinese styled democracy. Here, Chinese largely means Confucian. This leads to the following question: "Is a civil society that is mediated through a public sphere compatible with democracy that includes elements of Confucian styled social harmony?"

The definitive English language analysis of relations between media and society during the Post WWII era was *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert, Peterson et al. 1963). Written in the context of the cold war, it classified media models in relation to the kinds of governments in which these models could exist. For example, the "libertarian" model of the press in which free speech was guaranteed by private ownership of media could only exist within a democratic state. Whereas, a "Soviet" media model was suitable for a communist state in which private ownership of media would be forbidden. For many years the libertarian model was promoted in Western countries as the system modernizing nations needed for successful democracy.

Today this analysis of press-state relations is considered dated, both naïve about the effects of bottom line priorities among media owners and also ethnocentric in the way speech rights were formulated (Nerone 1995). In terms of the question asked above, it seems clear that the libertarian model promoted in *Four Theories* is not likely to contribute much to Confucian styled harmony because the libertarian model promotes disruptive

political speech regardless of social consequences or social harmony. Therefore, it is questionable whether a libertarian styled press could even in principle contribute to social harmony. The libertarian model's shortcomings were widely acknowledged as early as 1949 even in America. A commission headed by University of Chicago Chancellor Robert Maynard Hutchins was convened to analyze shortfalls in American press and media performance, shortfalls which included sensationalization of news coverage and inadequate provision of political information required for an informed electorate (Bates 1995). Attempting to ameliorate these shortcomings, the Hutchins Commission report included a recommendation for a social responsibility model of the press. But this model of the press never took hold, and American media operate in the mode of a libertarian system to this day.

Considerable disagreement remains over exactly what is needed for a democratic society of any kind, Western or Eastern. Is a commercial press capable of promoting a vigorous political society? If not, then would publicly funded systems be able to promote a vigorous political society? How about a combination of private and public models, i.e. a mixed model? Most importantly, whether commercial, public, or mixed, exactly what must the press accomplish to serve democratic ends? "Man bites dog" news? Civic journalism? Development journalism? All of these? None of them? And, is a western styled press really a universal end goal of national development? Does free speech mean precisely the same thing everywhere? Must it everywhere serve the same ends? Are these ends written somewhere in stone?

Today the most widely acclaimed analysis of these questions is that of the German sociologist Jurgen

Habermas (Habermas 1984; Habermas 1987). Habermas's name is widely associated with the phrase public sphere. His theory of the public sphere has been studied around the world, including China where scholars ask whether China has had anything like a public sphere and whether it should (Rowe 1990; Huang 1993; Rankin 1993). Habermas also analyzes the public sphere in relation to other social processes that may be relevant to the question of whether a mediated civil society and Confucian styled social harmony are compatible. For example, his theory of the lifeworld, which advances Edmund Husserl's study of the lifeworld, provides conceptual tools for analyzing culture change, including the role of the public sphere in culture change (Jacobson 2000). His discourse ethics offers a culturally sensitive treatment of the question of universal rights, including speech and communication rights (Jacobson 1998, 2004). And his theory of lifeworld colonization is designed to analyze threats to both the public sphere and culture. Some Chinese scholars have argued that these aspects of his theory are relevant to the Chinese context (Tong 2000).

Habermas argues that in all human interaction there is a universal assumption underlying speech. The assumption is that the underlying structure of speech is "oriented toward reaching understanding." Habermas's claim may seem counterintuitive in the face of common forms of deceit, manipulation, and simple bias. But for Habermas lying itself preys upon the orientation toward understanding because in lying one causes someone else to presume this orientation, though as a falsehood. He argues that understanding is the "telos" of human communication, or in other words its natural direction. Individuals do not always agree, to be sure, but speech of any kind assumes an orientation towards agreement even if it is an agreement to disagree. This telos is a "...gentle but obstinate, a never silent although seldom redeemed claim to reason" that is embodied in and operates through communication (Habermas 1979, p. 97). Without it speech would be impossible.

This analysis of the orientation towards agreement is part of his "action theory." It is this "action theory" that underlies Habermas's studies of reason, ethics, culture, social evolution, and more. It is what differentiates his treatment of the public sphere from other treatments of the public sphere including, for example, that of Hanna Arendt. On one hand it is the action theory that warrants the claim that the public sphere has an "epistemic value" (Habermas, 2006). This is the argument, following John Milton's *Areopagitica*, that public discussion tends to produce the truth. On the other hand, the action theory may also provide a theoretical framework for understanding deliberation in the public sphere that is particularly useful for the East. For, this model explains that deliberation involves an orientation toward understanding even when

deliberation is argumentative. One scholar characterizes public deliberation in China as follows: "Rather than as a vehicle for more autonomous participation in political life, it is regarded as a more effective way of realizing common understandings of social problems and their solutions. (Rosenberg, 2006, p. 82). This is one way that Habermas's theory may hold promise for thinking about the possibility of Chinese styled deliberation in the public sphere.

Using Jurgen Habermas's theory of communicative action I would like to explore the extent to which a public sphere might be compatible with elements of Confucian styled social harmony. This exploration will take the form of a treatment of certain issues associated with the analysis of cultural change. It will be provisional at best, one reason being the fact that defining Confucianism itself can be challenging, especially given the rapid pace of cultural change in China.

Another reason this exploration is provisional is that I am not a China specialist. So I must ask the reader's patience with my ignorance while I make a few points based on the theory's use for analyzing cultural change generally, referring to the Chinese context somewhat sparingly. The paper asks: 1) What must the media accomplish for a democratic political system and culture? 2) Given the pressure exerted worldwide by the globalization of markets, are there threats from marketization to the means of public discourse? These two questions can be rephrased using Habermas's follows: what are the cultural functions of the public sphere in a democracy, and is there a threat of lifeworld colonization in China?

### **The Cultural Value of the Public Sphere**

Following sociologist Max Weber, studies of modernization often focused on the spread of scientific and technological reason throughout society. From this perspective science is often viewed as the main prerequisite of modernity. For Habermas the emphasis on a technological, or instrumental, view of reason is too narrow. Modernity results from the spread of other uses of reason as well. Reason, in his view, includes science but extends to the use of "good reasons" in legal discussions, in discussions regarding preferred social norms, in family discussions of child rearing practices, in art, and more. These are all instances of "action oriented to understanding," or communication active as he calls it, that cannot be confined by anything other than the search for agreement, even if it the agreement to disagree. In other words, discussions, or discourses, of many kinds are prerequisites of modernity. Democracy, justice, and hence democratic media rely on all possible kinds of discourses oriented to understanding. And hence the defining characteristics of modernity are much broader than science alone.

The spread of discourses oriented toward understanding is treated by Habermas as rationalization of the lifeworld. The lifeworld concept is drawn from phenomenological philosophy, including the ideas of Edmund Husserl and others. Fundamentally, the lifeworld refers to a society's accumulated traditions, normative values, and preconscious know-how. It is the historically accumulated cultural traditions of a society that in turn provide the context for much of an individual's identity as well as society's group norms and aesthetic values. The phenomenological idea of a lifeworld is intended to emphasize the understanding that these lifeworld components are largely preconscious among citizens. The lifeworld is not merely the cultural artifacts or practices to which citizens might often point. It also includes meanings and preunderstandings that are *always already* present prior to conscious intentions.

All societies throughout all historical periods, therefore, have had lifeworlds. But action oriented to understanding through public speech has by no means always been a part of these lifeworlds. For Habermas, modernity is precisely the onset of such discussions, discussions that loosen the bonds of unquestioning fealty to tradition.

Under modern conditions of life none of the various rival traditions can claim *prima facie* general validity any longer. Even in answering questions of direct practical relevance, convincing reasons can no longer appeal to the authority of unquestioned traditions." (Habermas 1993, p. 151)

Modernity is the spread of action oriented towards understanding that is undertaken in increasingly specialized discourses in science and technology, in the law, and in the arts and cultural spheres. Scientific discourses dispassionately based on evidence, replication, and testing are different in kind than legal discourses based on careful reasoning and normative values. And artistic, aesthetic discourses are different still. In an important sense, modernity is the discourses themselves. The spread and specialization of these discourses is precisely the rationalization of the lifeworld. Referring once again to Weber, modernity is not rationalization through the spread of scientific reason. Instead, modernity is the spread of discourses oriented toward understanding, discourses each taking a form that is suitable to its sphere of society.

Tradition remains important to be sure. The lifeworld cannot be abandoned. And the process of rationalization of discourses merely alters the lifeworld, holding on to some traditions, abandoning other traditions, and creating hybrid forms of still other traditions. Modernization does not require the "passing of tradition" (Lerner 1958), but only its transformation. When seen against the background of a cultural lifeworld, communicative action in the public sphere

can be seen as a means for what Habermas describes as a reflective appropriation of tradition (Habermas 1996, p. 493). This is a discursive process in which citizens decide collectively which values and practices to abandon and which to retain.

This is why it is possible that China will be able to carry at least some of its Confucian norms forward, even if the western styled modernization theory has believed that modernization requires abandoning tradition. Confucian norms are part of the society's cultural lifeworld. Or to be more direct and clear, it is not reasonable to imagine China "not" carrying some of its Confucian norms forward. Societies cannot simply shed cultural identities and group norms.

Lifeworld rationalization results in what Habermas refers to as the structural differentiation of the lifeworld, differentiation into three cultural value spheres, which have already been alluded to above. The sphere of science and technology employs empirical theoretical discourses that treat the world in an objectivating fashion. The normative sphere employs legal and cultural discourses that treat the world as a community of social individuals concerned with matters of value preference. The aesthetic sphere employs artistic discourses intended to authentically share individual experiences.

The public sphere is none of these specialized individual value spheres, but it overlaps with all of them and it draws from all of them. It is a place in which all subjects may be addressed by specialists and non-specialists alike. It is the figurative place where private citizens converse about matters of common concern whether scientific, legal, political, moral, educational, or artistic. The public sphere (or public spheres as Habermas sometimes now says, in plural form) is informed by specialized discourses, but these cannot define or confine the public sphere. The reason for this is that the public sphere is the domain of citizens, not specialists.

It is only citizens that can legitimate the government activities through the formation of public opinion and the generation of communicative power. Habermas's analysis of political legitimation abandons the natural law tradition for grounding rights based political institutions, and replaces it with communicative power. Democratic legitimacy comes not from empty legal frameworks guaranteed in the sky above, but rather from the expressed consent of the governed who take part in actual discussions (Habermas 1975; Habermas 1996). This is where his discursive theory of politics combines with his discourse ethics, showing that political rights, the rule of law, and justice all issue from the same discursive source, which is modernity (Habermas 1990).

The public sphere extends beyond news media and it plays a central role in cultural change. Modern media

circulate ideas through radio, television, film, and increasingly over the Internet. Some of these ideas are expressed scientifically, some are expressed artistically and some are expressed in escapist entertainment. Yet all media and forms of expression play a role in informing, motivating, and contextualizing public opinion and public will. These unruly media condition public opinion on what traditional practices should be preserved, what traditional practices should be abandoned, and what traditional practices should be combined in hybrid form with other perhaps “newer” practices, including speech practices.

The public sphere is a broad and sprawling affair in which the traditions of the past are filtered as they become combined with the practices of the present and future, through a process that involves both learning and choosing among citizens. And only if learning and choosing are done consciously and collectively in art, entertainment, education, scholarship, and the public sphere, can sustainable change be achieved. Cultural policies promulgated from above are fragile at best. In short, during periods of rapid change, cultural values must therefore be handled in the public sphere, explicitly, if they are to be enduring.

Returning to the status of Confucianism, or Neoconfucianism, in China we are reminded that it is not possible to leave all Confucianism behind. Therefore, the challenge is to find ways to reflect productively on which values to preserve, obtaining as much collective will as possible on which specific values and practices to carry forward. Governmental policies, Confucian or otherwise, will only be considered legitimate by the people to the extent that citizens have expressed themselves collectively. And the government can only know which policies to promote if it converses with the people. Recent research reveals that public deliberation already takes place in many forms within China, usually at local levels (Leib & He, 2006). What other means of deliberation can be developed that will help the Chinese people converse with the Chinese government?

#### **The Media, Cultural Change and Lifeworld Colonization: A Threat to Cultural Values?**

The lifeworld was discussed above in two ways. First it was described as a storehouse of historical experience and cultural values, a storehouse that provides the content of social norms and individual identity. Second, it was described in relation to cultural change during modernization. For Habermas, modernization is nothing more and nothing less than the structural differentiation of the lifeworld, where discourses embodying action oriented toward understanding are institutionalized in different cultural value spheres, as well as in the public sphere which oversees all discourses insofar as they have public implications.

Thus, modernization is universalistic insofar as it involves discursive procedures, i.e. communicative action. However, it is culturally particularistic, or culturally sensitive, insofar as any agreements about values reached through discussion will reflect whatever cultural norms that citizens in their societies may choose to value. These norms may be individualistic, collectivistic, or some hybrid combination of both. We have seen above, that in the Chinese context these norms are certain to include elements of Confucian tradition.

This all sounds well and good. But what is the catch? What is likely to undermine this idealistic analysis of cultural change enacted through a public sphere? I’ll mention two and discuss only one of these. The first is autocratic power, which I will not discuss because it is fairly obvious. Communicative action in the public sphere can obviously be undermined if speech is curtailed. The second, “lifeworld colonization,” is more complicated and suggests that even in the absence of autocratic power, communicative dysfunctions can occur leading to anomie, alienation, and cultural impoverishment. In other words, alienation and cultural impoverishment can take place even in market-based societies that are free of centralized political control.

The concept of the lifeworld is of central importance for Habermas but it is only one of a central pair of concepts. The other of these two is “system.” And here Habermas introduces a distinction between communicative reason that is employed in the lifeworld, and system reason that is employed in markets and bureaucracy. Communicative reason is necessary for the formation of individual identity, the transmission of social norms, criticism in the cultural sphere, and more. It is necessary where our preferences or end values are at issue, where humans must speak to humans. To cultivate individual identities, to discuss social norms, and to decide our ultimate aims, everything must be on the table on a public basis. Efficiency is not important in such matters, but rather thoroughness and openness. In contrast, system reason is necessary for the management of markets and for the efficient functioning of bureaucracies. Here, end values are not at issue. Rather, the means for maximizing efficiency is of paramount importance. Well-defined rules of the game are required to operate markets, including rules for what can be said and done, and what is forbidden.

Both system and communicative reason are needed and must be in balance. Modernization is a process in which communicative forms of scientific, legal, and aesthetic reason are differentiated into their specialized value spheres, separated out from the undifferentiated cultural lifeworld of premodern tradition. This diminishes the authority of tradition while providing societies with new options for handling old problems.

But the lifeworld cannot be abandoned and should not be damaged if social values are to retain their motivating power, and if individual identities are to retain some connection with historical consciousness.

The thesis of lifeworld colonization holds that the relationship between system and lifeworld based forms of communication has become unbalanced in the West. It has become unbalanced through the intrusion of financial and administrative priorities that are governed using system reason into areas of the lifeworld that should be governed by communicative reason. Habermas adopts from his Frankfurt School forebears a critical stance towards the role of instrumental reason in society. The danger here is not from raw political ambition or class warfare. Instead it is out-of-control faith in bureaucratic processes and markets.

This is a problem, because efficiency, science and administrative processes are not suitable for making many important kinds of decisions. Many decisions require a frankly subjective and humane judgment, such as cultural, welfare, and perhaps environmental policy decisions, as well as others. When decisions requiring frankly subjective and humane judgments are made instead by efficiency experts and scientists then something important is lost. Technocratic forces and economic exploitation usurp the power for citizens to make decisions controlling their own lives.

Economists rather than labor itself explain what is best for labor. Technocrats who work for corporate interests rather than dispassionate citizen groups explain what are the threats from the environment. In many cases, economically and politically powerful interests mask their power behind a façade of technical expertise. But this is only part of the problem, because system reason can intrude into areas where money and power are not typically at stake. Educational psychologists explain what parents should do to raise their children. Social scientists explain the proper way to rehabilitate criminals. And systems of legal regulation in education, in social welfare, and in other areas take on a life of their own. The expertise and law in some of these areas are treated as authoritative, and end up not serving the people but rather requiring that people serve them. Habermas adopts a term from Marx in describing this as “reification.” But it is important to note that Habermas is not against markets. He is simply against “market fundamentalists” who feel that markets should make all decisions on all matters.

The thesis of lifeworld colonization is an update of Habermas’s much lauded analysis of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Habermas 1989). In that work, Habermas analyzed the colonization of the media themselves, as news media were transformed to suit business priorities. Today, Habermas argues that the jargons of scientific and professional specialties, or subsystems as he calls them, can serve to mystify

everyday understandings of policy that would otherwise be understandable to citizens in modern societies. In theory, media could help to demystify these policies. But as every day passes, media in the West are more and more subject to corporate priorities that diminish their ability to be useful in this way.

This describes Habermas’s analysis of lifeworld colonization. He maintains the view that purposive, or system, rationality has eclipsed the public sphere. In this process, citizens are robbed of the norms and aesthetic elements associated with their cultural lifeworlds, and have forced upon them replacements for these norms and aesthetic elements. These replacements are “reasons” that are suitable for serving administrative and market rationality. But as these are transmitted through the media they are unfortunately treated as if they serve the general interest of all.

In place of “false consciousness” we today have a “fragmented consciousness” that blocks enlightenment by the mechanism of reification. It is only with this that the conditions for a “colonization of the lifeworld” are met. When stripped of their ideological veils, the imperatives of autonomous subsystems make their way into the lifeworld from the outside – like colonial masters coming into a tribal society – and force a process of assimilation upon it. The diffused perspectives of the local culture cannot be sufficiently coordinated to permit the play of the metropolis and the world market to be grasped from the periphery. (Habermas 1987, p. 355)

This view is startling as an analysis of ideology-like processes in industrialized countries. But what is more startling is that it may also apply to the global periphery as well as to the post-industrialized West. In the Third World, neo-liberal economic policies perpetuate economic injustice. This takes place through global financial systems that have in the past largely been controlled by the United States and Europe as well as through the political economy of bilateral and multilateral loans given to Third World recipient countries. It can be called economic neo-colonialism. At the same time, insofar as neo-liberal economic policies are adopted in developing countries then the forces of internal lifeworld colonization are also strengthened. Economic and technocratic priorities become privileged. And economic and technocratic jargons and justifications are used to justify policy often against the expressed interests of citizens. The Third World thus suffers from a “double-colonization.” One is neo-colonialism from the perspective of global economic forces, while the other is lifeworld colonization in the national cultural sphere.

Much of the literature on Habermas’s work and its relevance to China asks whether his theoretical categories are appropriate for the Chinese context

(Huang, 1993). For example, is it reasonable to expect a public sphere in China given its historical differences with Europe? Has anything like a public sphere ever emerged in China? The same question should perhaps be asked about the concept of lifeworld colonization. Are economic and bureaucratic institutions developed well enough in China for lifeworld colonization to become a problem? If not in all of China then perhaps the society of China's rapidly developing cities, especially in the East, are vulnerable. And equally important, even if lifeworld colonization is not a problem in China today, might it be a threat for the future as China modernizes? The rapid accumulation of power among business interests, political elites and intellectuals surrounding the People's Congress suggests that concern about this problem is probably warranted even if it is not yet well advanced.

Returning to cultural change, one finds in the theory of communicative analysis a twofold analysis of culture. In the first part, the analysis of modernization sees modernization as a process of cultural change involving hybridization of new and old values, not cultural abandonment of tradition. This analysis recommends that societies undertake the process of hybridization through public discussion in art, news media, entertainment, cultural discussions, political meetings, and more. In the second part, the analysis of lifeworld colonization identifies threats to processes of healthy cultural change. The problem it identifies is not cultural imperialism. Cultural imperialism results from the imposition of one culture's values on another. Lifeworld colonization, alternatively, denies all culture. It reduces all decisions requiring value-based reflection to efficiency calculations. Thus lifeworld colonization is not imposed from the West upon the East, because the West suffers most of all from this affliction.

This is a broad threat. Due to the fact that all media participate in democratic culture through entertainment programming as well as news, lifeworld colonization also threatens social integration, transmission of social norms, healthy formation of individual identities, artistic institutions and more. When system rationality eclipses, or shoulders aside, the full range of discourses that should be employed across all cultural value spheres, then discourses of action oriented toward understanding generally are endangered. In other words, the cultural fruits of modernity in general are diminished whenever the orientation toward understanding in media is pushed aside by the inappropriate intrusion of corporate and administrative power.

### Summary and Conclusion

This paper addresses a question: "Is a civil society that is mediated through a public sphere compatible with democracy that includes elements of Confucian styled social harmony?" As a response to this question

I have used Jurgen Habermas's theory of communicative action to treat two issues associated with the analysis of cultural change. One concerns the democratic process of cultural change that takes place, or can take place, collectively in the public sphere. The other concerns threats to collectively determined cultural change.

I would like here to summarize and to conclude by raising two issues. To summarize, all tradition cannot be abandoned. Therefore, in the case of China, at least some Confucianism will unavoidably be carried into the future. The challenge is to determine how much Confucianism and which parts. If social change is to be enduring it must be undertaken publicly and collectively. This is the only way to produce hybrid social norms that have the legitimacy to motivate voluntary compliance among the citizenry.

Here is the first issue. How "free" must speech be in order to generate collective will for hybridization? Conservative political analysts may be worried that completely free speech will lead to political instability. This may be true. But these analysts may be wise to consider the argument that long-term stability is most surely guaranteed through collective reflection in the public sphere. The challenge for China is, perhaps, how quickly China can liberalize its emerging public sphere and still cultivate stability through transformation.

Conservative cultural analysis may be worried that completely free speech will lead to what the English scholar E.B. McPherson called "possessive individualism" (McPherson 1962). If the citizenry is allowed to express its preferences then there is a risk that only minimal elements of Confucian respect for harmony and collective well-being will be retained. This is a risk, to be sure, but it is probably a risk that is unavoidable. If collective values are going to survive in Asia, especially in the age of the Internet, these values will have to be selected on the basis of collective agreement.

Habermas argues that individual and collective rights serve one another in a complementary manner. Collective rights guarantee the autonomy of the individual, while individual rights can be exercised for the pursuit of collective well-being (Habermas 2001, p. 125). He is not alone in making this argument (Ghai 2000, p. 45). If this is true, then one might hope that if given individual freedoms, Chinese citizens will then choose to retain the respect for harmony and collective well-being for which Confucianism is noted. It will be mixed in a hybrid form with values from the West, to be sure, but this needn't be seen as a tragedy. The tragedy would be if this experiment in hybridizing the West and East were not undertaken in a self-conscious and reflective way at all. Further research should be conducted into freedoms being granted to local governments following Leib and He (2006), noted

above, and the role that media and deliberation might play in making good on these freedoms.

The West embodies more respect for collective well-being and harmony than it is sometimes given credit for. Collective values are well represented in a number of European countries. Even in America, small town values have always exhibited an appreciation for local ways and collective solidarity. It seems probable that East and West have much to teach one another that each would value from the other.

This raises the second issue, because the greatest threat to social harmony in both the East and West may be the same. It is lifeworld colonization. It is clear that China has opted to participate in the global economy. China will therefore increasingly be saddled with social arrangements that are presumed by, and necessary for, participation in the global economy. China's transition to a global economic society starts from a different place, in some ways, than does the West's transition. But they face the same challenges in adapting to the shared global economic environment and both must adapt. The concept of lifeworld colonization might usefully join the concept of the public sphere as a category of Habermas's theory that receives attention among Chinese scholars as well as Western scholars who study China.

Here, the shared challenge will be to find ways that market rationality and the global cult of technical expertise does not swallow up values totally, including both the values of individualism and collectivism. In China's case the challenge might be to cultivate a mediated public sphere, guaranteed by legal systems, that can withstand and hold back pressures for lifeworld colonization, preserving China's goal of a harmonious society.

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