



# Nordic Centre Fudan Newsletter

Summer 2021

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## From the chair of the Nordic Centre Board

By the turn of the year, the University of Gothenburg took over the chairmanship of the NC secretariat. Since then, it has been a true pleasure to learn more about the network and the opportunities for collaboration it establishes. The team in Gothenburg is very grateful for the kind support we received in the transmission process, both from colleagues at the University of Bergen and the NC staff. On a more personal level, I have been met with an extraordinary constructive openness and support when taking up the chairmanship in the Board and the Council. I am thankful for this and looking forward to work together with you in developing the NCF during the upcoming years.



Many lessons can be learned from the past year, strongly marked by the ongoing pandemic. Despite travel restrictions, the world has come closer through the rapid development of virtual platforms. It has become easier than ever to connect without long distance travel. Thanks to the rapid transition, our students have had the opportunity to take part in other countries' study culture and academic environments without spending time and money on

travel. Our researchers and scholars have had many opportunities to exchange experiences and broaden their network via digital conferences and seminars. Moreover, together with a number of member institutions, forming a working group meeting on-line, we have succeeded in pointing out a direction for the continued collaboration by carving out interdisciplinary prioritized research areas. The areas derives from the new strategy and will be presented at the next council meeting for approval.

This said, we have also been increasingly aware of the limitations of the ZOOM-room. The nuances in discussions are easily getting lost and the dynamics of a meeting IRL can only partly be replicated in the digital format. Nevertheless, the increased awareness of the possibilities offered for distance on-line communication will be of great value for the development of Sino-Nordic relations also when we slowly but surely enter a stage of post-pandemic normality.

Within the next couple of weeks, the second round of our digital summer school will be launched. We are grateful for our outstanding teachers and organizers who, despite the conditions, create comprehensive experiences for the participating students.

In October, we repeat the success from 2020 and arrange a digital education fair named The European Dream. The fair is organized in close cooperation with the Austrian Centre in Shanghai. In connection to the education fair, we will finally celebrate the NC's 25th anniversary.

Hence, the activities in the network have far from stopped. However, we miss the physical reality. We long for the small talk on the coffee break, the opportunity to visit each other's universities, cultures and countries. To be able to end the working day with a dinner together. To take part in each other's cultures and traditions. All those things that never will be the same without the physical reality.

Many challenges remain despite extensive vaccination programmes. It will still take a while before we are there, but once the restrictions are lifted, we look forward re-launching the Nordic Centre and meet the pent-up need for activities and events.

*Per Cramér, Chair of Nordic Centre Board and Council, and Dean at the School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg*



## **New NC Programme Manager Veli-Matti Palomäki**

For already 25 years, Nordic Centre at Fudan University has played an important role in bridging Nordic universities with China. Having lived and worked in Shanghai for almost five years, I have had the pleasure to closely follow the activities at Nordic Centre, while often also collaborating more directly.

While the Nordic Centre is not the only example of a research or innovation centre between Nordic and Chinese universities, it is many ways unique. Its 25 years of history is remarkable in itself - we all know how fast and oftentimes unpredictable the change in China can be. As a network of 28 different universities, and its collectively Nordic presence as a center for research, innovation, as well as culture in a broader sense, the Nordic Centre plays an invaluable role.

Needless to say, the ongoing pandemic has left a deep mark on all aspects of life, and the Nordic Centre has not been an exception. I am hopeful that sooner rather than later the familiar activities can return to normal - and at the same time we can introduce new ones as well. We hope to facilitate new collaborative partnerships between our Nordic members and their Chinese counterparts, and between Nordic and Chinese students. There is also a lot more we can do "beyond the academia" - taking full advantage of the dynamic and innovative business environment in Shanghai, creating more concrete interactions between researchers and students and businesses and other stakeholders.

Taking up the role as the new Programme Manager at the Nordic Centre is an exciting challenge. For the past four and a half years, I worked at the Consulate General of Finland in Shanghai, responsible for communications and cultural affairs, working closely for example with Nordic businesses and institutions for higher education. Prior to coming to Shanghai, I have also worked as a teacher of Mandarin Chinese and as a coordinator of a national-level project promoting Chinese language

learning in Finnish schools. I am happy to be able to bring all this past experience to the new position.

There are certainly still challenges ahead, and it will take some time for normalcy to truly return. But we are also in a unique position to navigate through and find new innovations in the new reality. I am looking forward to embarking on this journey with all of you.

*Sincerely; Veli-Matti Palomäki, Programme Manager, Nordic Centre*



## **Successful student event organized by the Nordic Centre**

On May 25th, Nordic Centre held the first student event after the Covid breakout. About 30 students from 15 different departments of Fudan University gathered on the outdoor terrace of Nordic Centre from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm, including international students from Sweden, Mongolia and South Korea.

The event started with a warm-up game: an early summer version of chocolate Egg Hunt in the green backyard of Nordic Centre. Then the students were assigned to 5 groups named after Nordic countries Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Group members got the chance to know each other and learn about Nordic countries by playing different games organized by the staff of Nordic Centre. During the break of games, all the students also enjoyed the well-prepared afternoon tea while socializing with new friends. At the end of the event, all the participants also received presents like post cards and books about Nordic society.

In our feedback interviews, the event has been highly evaluated. "All the games



are so interesting and engaging. I was able to meet a lot of interesting new friends and didn't even realize time flies so fast. The atmosphere is welcoming and open. It's probably one of the best student events I have ever attended in Fudan", said Xue, a Chinese student. Kim from South Korea studied with Demola innovation course before and said "I have always enjoyed the events organized by Nordic Centre before Covid. Finally, now after more than a year, we can mingle and meet new friends again. Thanks for this great opportunity provided by Nordic Centre."

*Text and photo: Wen Liu, Programme Officer, Nordic Centre*



## **Inauguration of Centre of China Studies in Oslo**

On February 26, an agreement on co-developing Fudan-European Centre for China Studies was signed between Fudan University and University of Oslo (UiO).

President of Fudan University Xu Ningsheng and Rector of University of Oslo Svein Stølen addressed the signing ceremony via video links. The ceremony was co-hosted by Vice President of Fudan University Chen Zhimin and Vice Rector of University of Oslo Åse Gornitzka.

Xu expressed his appreciation of the efforts made by the experts and staff of the two universities. He pointed out that the agreement will open a new chapter in the long history of cooperation between Fudan and UiO. UiO is one of Fudan's valued global partners and one of the founding members of the Nordic Centre established 25 years ago at Fudan University.

Considering the common challenges we face today and the profound consequences

they may have if not solved, Xu advocated international scientific research cooperation as one of the essential solutions. Xu hopes that the establishment of the Centre will strengthen Fudan's partnership with UiO in the fields of humanities, social sciences and medicine and expand new areas of cooperation, especially in frontier disciplines.

Stølen said the Centre is a great leap forward in the cooperation between the two universities. He hopes that the Centre will enhance knowledge sharing, foster academic cooperation and promote interdisciplinary collaborations in the fields of climate, energy, governance and medicine. Fudan-European Centre for China Studies is not only a bilateral programme between two universities, but is also open to other institutions across Norway, Northern Europe and even the whole Europe. He expects the two sides to open their partnership networks to each other and seek for more opportunities for cooperation in the future.

*Text: Wang Mengqi, Student at Fudan University, and Li Yijie, Translator, Copywriter & Editor at Fudan News Center*

*Photo: Cheng Zhao*



## **Demola Innovation Course now available online**

Since 2019, Demola has been working with Nordic Centre, School of Innovation & Entrepreneurship, Fudan University. 1,072 Chinese students from 276 universities have applied to Demola projects during the past two years.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak in early 2020, Demola offered the course "Nordic Innovation Practices" online through Fudan University. This was the beginning of

a successful transformation of this global co-creation platform. Young talents, regardless of their locations and backgrounds, can now apply and participate in the Demola innovation challenges. By the beginning of the year, Demola Global started to collaborate with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland to launch the "One for Humanity 2021" online global challenges. This initiative provides students with international team experience, co-creation process guidance, 8 ECTS certificate as well as Demola project certificate upon successful completion. As the Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, Ville Skinnari said, "One for Humanity is a powerful example of Finland's leadership at the global level in bringing together young people to resolve the pressing challenges of the future".

We interviewed Shiyong WU, a Fudan University bachelor student who is participating in the "One for Humanity" global online project April batch.

***Hi, Shiyong Wu, which Demola project topic you are participating in now? Could you briefly introduce it to us?***

We are working on a project of bubbling over an echo chamber. These are common phenomenon in current social media platform. Due to the algorithm recommendation system, the social platform only recommends things that meet people's taste according to their surfing behavior. People can only see and hear the things they want to see, which creates an illusion that all the people around the world all see things in the same way, hence reinforcing the primal bias and creating the echo chamber. We want to figure out the driving factors behind the phenomenon of the echo chamber and the solutions to solve it.

***How about your teammates, where are they from?***

One of my team members comes from Nepal, one is from India and the other three comes from China. They are all nice people and good team players. We get together to discuss not only the report but also the characteristics of our own cultures.

***How would you evaluate your Demola experiences?***

It is really a wonderful experience of intercultural communication. People from different countries work on the same project together and share opinions freely. Since we come from quite different cultural background, we can see things from different perspectives and finally give out some creative ideas through full discussion. For instance, my group is now trying to design an App to solve the echo chamber effect. Team members majoring in sociology analyze the functions through the view of consumer psychology while those now working in IT companies put forward technical ideas. In addition to that, we also have many chances for cross-team communication. I once made an interview with a Spanish student to find out the impact of the echo chamber phenomenon on political preference.

***Would you recommend it to other students? Why? And in your eyes, what types of students are suitable to join in Demola projects?***

I will strongly recommend it to my friends and classmates because this experience is really amazing. Demola projects not only allow me to improve my intercultural communication skills but also enable me to make friends with



students coming from all over the world. Our team not only talks about tasks and reports in weekly meetings but also share interesting experience, like the food we like most and the countries who we want to visit most.

July 11 is the deadline to apply for the next round Demola international innovation projects (from July 22- September 16). There will be three more rounds in the fall semester. Welcome students from all around the globe to apply!

[Apply and more information](#)



## **New member - Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University**

We are very happy to welcome Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University as a new member in the Nordic Centre. We reached out to Ms Li Wei at XJTLU with a couple of questions about their thoughts and expectations on their new membership.

### ***What made you interested in NCF membership?***

We became interested in the NCF as we move into the next stage of the university development, building up more our research potential. As an English Medium of Instruction (EMI) institution within China, and a Chinese tier 1 university, we feel that we have natural strengths and advantages with regard to research collaboration and the research environment. XJTLU already has learning and teaching partnerships with many NCF institutions, and it is natural to take relationships to the next level.

In addition, XJTLU is opening a new campus in September 2022, the XJTLU Entrepreneur College (Taicang) – which is just north of Shanghai. NCF already has training partnerships with China, and we feel that the new campus and its facilities will increase the training potential for both NCF and China through XJTLU.



***What are your expectations on your membership in the NCF?***

Our main expectation is that we will be able to build meaningful research collaborations at the university, academy/school/department, and individual levels, which build on the strengths of each. We still need to familiarize ourselves more with how NCF works, but we feel that there is enormous potential for collaboration with both NCF and constituent institutions within it. The membership will also broaden our horizons in looking away from being UK centric when it comes to partnership and research potential.

We already have individual staff members asking about the opportunities available as part of membership of NCF.

***What will be your main contribution to the cooperation?***

Our main contribution will be in terms of knowledge, facilities and location. Knowledge in the form of research and research potential, as highlighted above, facilities on both the existing Suzhou Industrial Park campus and new Taicang campus, which are cutting edge, and location being near/next to Shanghai; ideal for training facilities and centres.

*On behalf of the Nordic Centre in Fudan and the secretariat in Gothenburg, we wish you all a fantastic summer!*

[Nordic Centre Fudan](#) | [Contact](#) | [nc.secretariat@gu.se](mailto:nc.secretariat@gu.se)