

Trash or Treasure?

How waste became fortune in the Chinese Dakou phenomenon



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Abstract:

The reform of the Chinese economy in the late 1970s has led considerable unbalanced economic and cultural developments. One phenomenon, Dakou, music compact disc imported to China as plastic waste, has emerged on the media market. The underlying cause is a mixture: e.g. development policy, insufficient management on imported waste and awakening individual agency. Since then, Dakou phenomenon plays as a part of the social development for human beings, and the context for their behaviour and development. This thesis has situated Dakou phenomenon in the framework of China's development procedure, from the perspective of human ecology analysed its construction and inspiration. Meanwhile, I argue that the government shall place people as the priority for the social development and support them to fulfil their agency.

Key words: Dakou, China's development policy, imported waste, human development, individual agency, sustainability

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Abbreviations

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

HDR Human Development Report

HDI Human Development Index

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1. Introduction

In 1978, Chinese government initiated a national policy on *REFORMING AND OPENING-UP* to the outside world. Since then, China has undergone sweeping, economic changes in an officially sponsored transition from a Stalinist centrally planned economy to a socialist market economy (White, Howell, and Shang 1996). This policy led China into an era of rapid economic development. And all industries have been through a massive expansion. But behind the thriving manufacturing, China is meeting the challenges of the shortage of raw materials (Guo 2008). As Hicks, Dietmar and Eugster explain this is:

“China is often characterised as a resource-poor country, with per capita distribution of natural resources at 58% of the world average. In addition, China’s growing appliance manufacturing sector requires large amounts of raw materials and components, and recycled materials are regarded more favourably than they are in Europe or North America” (2005, 463).

This fact left China with no choice, but to rely on massive imports (Yoshida 2005). Since then, China began to import waste from developed countries. Recycled materials such as used paper, electronic machinery, waste metals, plastic waste and scrap (Customs-info 2009), were transported to China as the important inputs for manufacturing necessary for the industrial expansion.

Plastic waste is an important category among all imported wastes. According to statistics, between 2000 and 2008, European exports of plastic waste increased by 250%, of which 87% ended up in China (Moses 2013). Imported waste CD, in essence, is the surplus of audiovisual products in developed countries. They are the trash that needs to be destroyed in US or European countries, which requires a lot of labor and space for further managing and storage (Ibid.). However, because the tapes or CD cases consist of high quality of plastic fibers necessary for manufacturing, China imported them as

plastic waste since the middle of 1980s (Steele 2008). To prevent them from reselling, China Custom punches a random cut on CDs (see Figure 1).



Figure 1 a typical Dakou CD



Figure 2 an ideal Dakou CD, with a small cut on the case but no harm on the disc

At that time, “music was inherently provocative, and China was ruled by a monolithic totalitarian state without any freedom” (de Kloet 2010, 16). So some people who have the acquaintances with the Customs started realizing this could be a profitable business due to its novelty. Thus they started bribing the officials to only had a slight cut on the edge of the cases to avoid destroying the music recorded on the disc (Customs staff 2014) (see Figure 2). In this way, these CDs leaked into the black market as audiovisual products instead of wastes, namely Dakou CD. Then and there, most styles of Western music were not liberally accessible on the Chinese domestic market “due to political and economic reasons” (de Kloet 2010, 16). However, Dakou CD brought this young generation to the centre of a “global music culture” (de Kloet 2010, 170). Through this unique and underground dissemination, a lot of Chinese youth who was born between the late 1970s and 1980s suddenly became exposed to Western culture.

Although Dakou CD came to China as the plastic waste, it has not been solely treated as trash. It makes different significances for distinctive groups of people: For the Chinese government, these CDs bring abundant raw materials. For some corrupt Customs staff, it means an extra income. A lot of Dakou dealers use this as their means of livelihood. For Chinese youth who is addicted to these music, it becomes a label stands for identity, lifestyle and value change. With the spread and popularity of Dakou CDs, a generation has risen, which “represents a generation that refuses to be suppressed, that seeks unseeingly, that connects to the underground, that creates marginal culture and lifestyle, that grows stubbornly, that resists and struggles” (de Kloet 2010, 21). This group of youth who has grown up with the Dakou CDs has been classified as the Dakou generation, which firstly was identified by the book *BEIJING NEW SOUND* (Yan, Ou, and Nie 1999). Lastly, the dakou CDs have inspired many bands and audiences, stimulated the rise of new independent record companies, brought the rebirth of Chinese rock music (de Kloet 2010). It brought a severe change in China’s musical development.

The *REFORMING AND OPENING-UP* is the first national policy based on a fundamental key of opening up to the outside world since the founding of People’s Republic of China. And it is an exclusive policy on development of socialism with Chinese characteristics (China’s State Council 1994). This policy gradually reverses China’s appearance of closure and backwardness to modernization and industrialization (World Bank 1997). Take economic growth as an example, according to the World Bank data, China’s nominal GDP grew roughly 36 times in past 3 decades (2014). But, it is equally widely agreed that China’s growth during this period has been resource intensive, the bulk of GDP has come from the explosive growth of industrial production, “drawing heavily on energy, and natural resources” (Kuijs and Wang 2005, 2). Another drawback is this reform is not striking a balance with planner’s priority and people’s preference (World Bank 1997). With the deepening of the reform, Chinese economic base has gradually transformed from a command economy into a market-based one; the political system yet remained with a high degree of centralization, and cultural industries are still highly regulated by the government, which has strict controls on all forms of media (U.S. Commercial Service

2013). Comparing with the tremendous change on economic growth, the enhancement on politics and culture sphere has not reached the degree of similarity.

The phenomenon of Dakou is unusual and unique; it only survives for a certain group of people under China's specific situation at a precise timing (de Kloet 2010). It reflects both the cause and the consequence of the imbalance of China's development. Firstly, although the initial motivation for importing waste is to supplement the insufficient raw materials in domestic industries, the loose government supervision and bureaucratic management gave the rise of this illegal Dakou market. Secondly, the popularity and wide spread of Dakou phenomenon can also be seen as the result of the conflict between Chinese youth's need on multi-cultures and over strict governance. Since with this context of commercialisation and globalisation (de Kloet 2010), Chinese youth already located in the trend of openness and sensed the values outside the country or socialism. They got curious but no access with these curiosities, and they have a need, but no approach to be nurtured and cultivated with more diversity. This curiosity and demand cannot be eliminated by heavy political depression. And ultimately, the emergence of Dakou phenomenon in the mid-1990s satisfied this requirement and filled in this gap (de Kloet 2010). Regardless in which way Dakou phenomenon exists, it truly offers a chance for Chinese youth to know the outside world and created a more open cultural sphere.

1.1. Problem definition

Although Dakou phenomenon has existed for a long time, due to its underground being, not too much attention has been drawn from the academic field. Few researchers have systematically analyzed it as a derivative business of imported waste trade or examined its rationality and significance for Chinese youth. Most studies in the subject of Chinese imported waste eventually would put the focus on the government management or utilization situation (Kuang 2005; Dong 2002; Yao et al. 2009), and much of the studies was the analysis and integration of results from empirical investigations, which put weighty emphasis on highlighting the existing problems or environmental damage, but

in lack of quantitative measurements. These studies underlined the magnitude of the imported waste and to some extent, improved the public perception of the matter regarding the environment. However, none of them integrated this subject into a comprehensive context of Chinese development policy or underlined about its connection with cultural change. This knowledge gap sparked my interest to investigate this topic from a new perspective to understand the relation between human and its built environments under the human ecological scope.

Furthermore, there is no research used Dakou phenomenon as an entry point to reflect China's guiding public policy and argued its flaws or made suggestions on its further drift. *REFORMING AND OPENING-UP* policy has been introduced to China by more than 30 years, although the government is continuously making strategies and guidelines based under this framework, most of them are on effort of economy. The meaning of human development and the importance of diverse cultures in the development process have been largely abandoned. It is very hard to find any practical action on human development or multi-cultural construction. This reality is quite on the contrary to the basic principles of the social development, especially when the socioeconomic development has a powerful impact on what people want and do, and has given the upsurge to a new type of humanistic society that is increasingly people-centered (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). As I am presenting in this thesis, the vigorous influence of Dakou phenomenon already manifested the disagreement between governmental control and the public consciousness, more and more Chinese youth are realized to use their rise of knowledge to strive for individual autonomy, self-expression and free choice (Ibid.). Chinese authority could not be a sustainable organization anymore, if it persists in using the power as a tool to ignore people's need and requirement. There is an urgent requirement to raise levels of effective developmental functioning and thereby increase the proportion of individual differences (Bronfenbrenner 1992). Therefore, it is worth having a discussion on how this biased policy will ultimately risk comprehensive social development.

1.2. Research objectives and questions

Human ecology is a discipline inquiring into the patterns and process of interaction of humans with their environments (McDonnell and Pickett 1990). Human values, wealth, life-styles, resource use, and waste, etc. must affect and be affected by the physical and biotic environments (Ibid.). Therefore, the objective of the research is, from the human ecology perspective, considering Dakou phenomenon as a part of social environment to analyze its establishment, inspiration and sustainability. In order to address this objective, the following research questions guided the work:

- 1. What have being the structural and individual drivers and actors involved in the Dakou phenomenon?*
- 2. How does the Dakou phenomenon influence the relationship between individuals and their built environment?*
- 3. Is the Dakou phenomenon sustainable? If not, what could be the limitations affecting its future?*

A case-oriented study has been adapted into this research. The approaches including literature review on published academic papers, text interpretation on policy documents and semi-structured interviews.

1.3. Scope and limitation

Before setting methodology and theoretical framework, it is important to clarify the scopes and limitations occurred in this thesis. By doing this, readers can comprehend what factors I have been taken into account when managing this research.

The scope of this research is to discuss Dakou phenomenon from the built or social environment perspective instead of the natural environment. Therefore, the trade on imported waste is an entry point instead of a research focus of this study. The theory or findings connected with the imported waste is thus to further emphasize its relationship with the Dakou phenomenon.

1.3.1. Culture and the styles of music

Hoebel describes culture as an integrated system of learned behavior patterns which are characteristic of the members of society and which are not a result of biological inheritance (1972). This made me think about if Dakou culture is qualified as a collective ideology manifested through collective behavior. The Dakou culture which will be discussed in this thesis poses its impact merely in specific generations, earlier or later groups of Chinese people are hardly to understand its importance (Yan, Ou, and Nie 1999). And even among the influenced audience, there also exist different levels of the affection. It may not have enough universality covered the whole Chinese population; however it represented the evolved human capacity to classify and represent experiences with symbols, and to act imaginatively and creatively (Kohls 2001). For different people, Dakou has its different meaning; it could be just a period hobby, or a collective preference, or a tool to understand other cultures, or a business for making money, or a lifetime.

Another fact is Dakou culture made many music styles widespread and well-accepted among Chinese youth, in addition to popular music. Alternative music, post-punk, dream-pop, slowcore, ambient pop and noise pop etc., all these forms got lots of followers (Ren 2014). I began to think about if these styles are generally approved concepts when talking about cultural change. People may argue it only served for a minority group. However, music here has a broader sense about rebellious, individualistic, and explosive factor, which seems incongruent with modern Chinese society, they represent the Chinese youth's relationship with the outside world (Campbell 2011), in this research forms of music are not only representing the music itself.

1.3.2. Objectivity

This thesis connects very closely with where I come from and in what context I was growing up. I am a typical Chinese post-80s; which refers to the generation, whose members were born between 1980 and 1989 in Mainland China, after the introduction

of the One-child policy¹ (Stanat 2006). I and my peers grew up in an environment of tremendous economic growth and social change, high technology, and rigorous education standards, at the same time, often experience a palpable generation gap between us and elders (Ibid.). I started to know Dakou CDs when I was still in high school, and since then, it became an essential companion when the stress from intensive study or loneliness without siblings surrounded me. I am used to feel stimulated and joyful when wandering in some different languages and rhythms.

It is a pleasure to share with everyone more real life happened in Chinese youth from my opinion; however, I am also worried this personal experience or feelings will affect the objectivity of this research. Depending on Haraway, “subjectivity is multidimensional; so, therefore, is vision” (1988, 586). Based on this vision, I am not involving personal emotions or revealing private experience on this subject; my purpose is to consider Dakou phenomenon as my research subject instead of my own identity, and to discuss its formation, inspiration and the possibility of future existence. Borrowing Haraway’s words again: I am seeking “the subject position, not of identity, but of objectivity” (Ibid.). That is, I am performing this research as an objective observer and analyst.

1.3.3. Data and informants

Due to the data limitation of the relevant data resource, I am prevented from applying any quantitative analysis in this study. A slight portion of statistics has been used only to give readers some intuition about the findings. Referring to collect data, the principal challenge is Chinese government’s low transparency on sharing information with the public; there are many boundaries and limitations to have detailed official statistics, and only nearly four years’ data are available for public. However, the research objective and questions mentioned above already determined a priority on my data, which is qualitative data from the case study, including literature review on published papers, policy document interpretation and interviews, is much more valuable than quantitative

¹ The one-child policy, officially the family planning policy, is the population control policy of the People's Republic of China; it was introduced to China since 1979.

data. After all, I am not going to analyse the amounts of the imported waste, so this part of the data is sufficient for accomplishing the research purpose.

One of my informants is the Dakou CD dealer; the main reason for me to involve the dealer into my research is to have an inclusive understanding of this business from different angles. It is not straightforward to get in touch with him, and my interview intention has been refused numerous times. Since his business is always underground and gray, this makes him feel very suspicious and uncomfortable when an outsider is approaching. It is important for a researcher to build connections and rapport in these dealers' circle to have a deep insight; however, this is quite time-consuming. Although I reached him through a referral, he still insists only accepting the interview off the record. So I can only use his information as references and backup materials instead of as direct findings.

1.4. Target audience

This thesis targets in most of the researchers from the human ecology discipline. The nature of the analysis of Dakou phenomenon also makes this thesis beneficial for the people who feel curious but difficult to comprehend the formation of Dakou phenomenon in China. At the same time, the research topic also makes it suitable for my Chinese peers who share the same memory and emotional sense with me.

2. Research Methodology

The main objective of this research is to consider Dakou phenomenon as a part of social environment of human beings, to examine its formation, impact and sustainability.

Based on the complicated nature of Dakou phenomenon, I brought the case study here as a strategic qualitative research methodology (Noor 2008). At the same time, with the elements of narrative research. Yin (2009, 187-188) emphasizes the importance of using various perspectives within the same case studies to increase the validity of the results. So during the research process, aiming to examine the formation and impacts of Dakou

phenomenon, a lot of other approaches have also been included. Not as most study did (Yoshida 2005; Zheng et al. 2008; Guo 2008), data collection and data analysis occurred in this research process is integrated rather than being split into different stages. Figure 3 illustrates the methods and the design of this study.

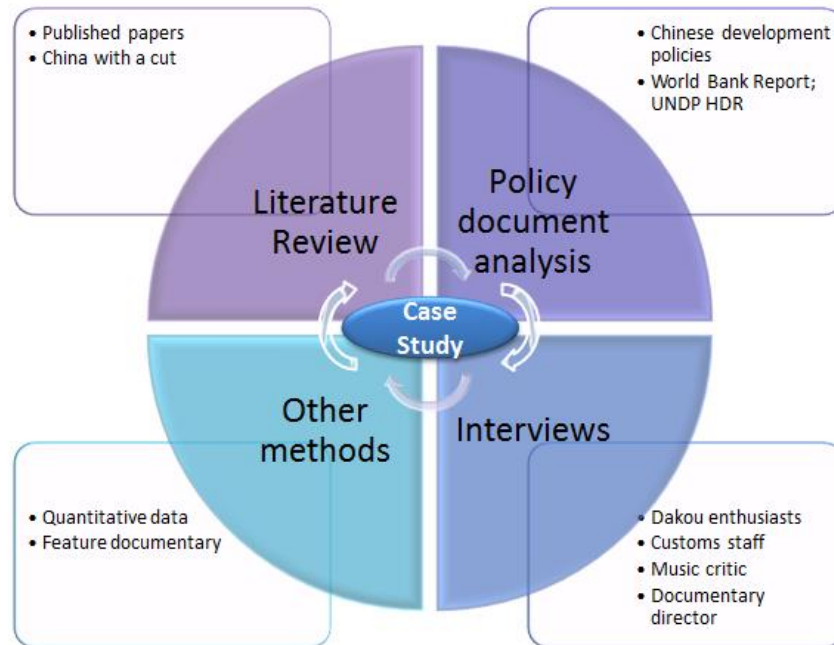


Figure 3 the methodology

The main method applied is a case-oriented study of Dakou phenomenon. I start it with a thorough literature review regarding cultural change since 1980s in China, and imported waste under the context of social transition period. At this stage, the purpose is to identify the research gap. Secondly, more concrete materials are obtained through several approaches. Interpretation on Chinese policies regarding social development and the Customs standards concerning imported waste helped me get an overall understanding on how the power preaches the development philosophy of society. Then, reviewing the book *CHINA WITH A CUT* by Jerone De Kloet was primarily to enrich the insights of the Dakou phenomenon based on my recognized knowledge from another perspective. Different questions had been set based on the accumulated data for interviewees targeting on answering the research questions presented in this thesis.

At the same time, in order to emphasize the irrationality remains in China's development policy and make reasonable suggestions for its future improvement, I also used additional materials regarding to China's social progress and human development from two different resources to establish the benchmark of recognized criterions on social development, and based on these, to assemble the findings part of this thesis.

Next I will specify these different methods mentioned above with more details and descriptions. Noteworthy, each one of these methods does not constitute an isolated research tool; it strongly connected with one another and hence penetrated through the whole research process.

2.1. Case study

The main aim for this study is to find out the underlying principle facts of the Dakou phenomenon (Yin 2009), therefore, a case study has been applied into this research. At the same time, a lot of narrative study has been combined. Bringing a case study into methodology helped me investigate Dakou phenomenon more systematically, because most of my insights with Dakou merely stayed in personal knowledge and observation from my own experience. It is necessary to set a clear scenario to complement my understandings, at the same time, to capture the complexity of this single case (Eisenhardt 1989). In this respect, I would analytically present the main conclusions and discussions at the end of my research.

Usually, case studies have been criticized by some authors as lacking scientific rigour and do not address generalizability. However, this study reiterated its appropriateness when dealing with the process and complex real-life activities in great-depth (Noor 2008). The underlying formation of Dakou phenomenon is complicated; many factors and actors are involved. This converts it into an ideal case study to examine the interactions between the built environment and human beings. Besides, large amount narratives from informants, which closely connected to the case study, offered me a broader viewpoint on Dakou phenomenon. In this research, case study thoroughly

connected with other approaches and could be seen as an integration of all other tactics. By utilizing this strategy, I am capable of gaining a complete view of Dakou phenomenon and provide credible findings since many sources of evidence were used.

2.2. Literature review

Literature review in this thesis served different aims and thus has been used respectively into distinctive phases during this research. When reviewing a large number of academic articles, it was used as an instrument to identify elementary information about the cultural change related to the waste trade after the application of *REFORMING AND OPENING UP*. In this phase, published papers, journals, reports and academic literature are all included to get more background information related to this topic. First of all, material related to this subject is not very abundant, most of them still stayed at the level of describing the situation and management of the waste trade itself. Once there are numerous studies already moved forward to the outcome and influences, most of them have a problem which can be described as too lopsided. Either the content or the proposing solution cannot be measured as a comprehensive analysis. For example, some of them are keen to discuss environmental damage and usually, these discussions merely started from these emerging problems themselves, but in lack of a corresponding background which fostered these troubles. Secondly, researchers have never considered cultural change into this context when regarding the waste trade or the development policy. There is no previous study has connected the cultural change, waste trade and policy as an integration to do the analysis.

Second part of the literature review concentrated on the book, *CHINA WITH A CUT* by Jeroen de Kloet. De Kloet is a Dutch professor of Globalisation Studies, his work focused on cultural globalisation, in particular in the context of East Asia (de Kloet 2012). Since the early 1990s, he began his field work concentrate on Chinese rock music and youth culture (Yu 2014). He firstly published an article in title *POPULAR MUSIC AND YOUTH IN URBAN CHINA, THE DAKOU GENERATION* on *CHINA QUARTERLY*, discussed the development of Chinese rock from a “hooligan culture” to “Dakou culture” in 1990s. In his view, this

transition prominent the importance of rock and pop music among Chinese youth, and could be seen as a mark that China is absorbing more and more Western culture in the era of globalization (de Kloet 2005).

In his book *CHINA WITH A CUT: GLOBALISATION, URBAN YOUTH AND POPULAR MUSIC*, the author put more focus on the Dakou generation and its aftermath (de Kloet 2010), integrated more factors connected with Dakou phenomenon, and had an organized decomposition on the development of Chinese rock and pop music, so far as to further analysis upon the entire music industry expansion in China. This book explores a critical period in the development of Chinese youth culture – the ‘roaring 1990s,’ delving into the socio-cultural transformations in the years up to 2008 (Ibid.).

This book inspired my thesis on many levels; the basic one is the content inspiration: both the author and I agreed that the Dakou phenomenon has a great contribution towards the fast, vigorous development in Chinese contemporary music, especially for the rock and pop music. However, the value of Dakou is not confined to music; it is a fortune for Chinese youth, in terms of culture, vision, lifestyle, and the courage for freedom and democracy. Chinese youth is drawn to global culture to a greater extent than anticipated by the government (de Kloet 2010). Furthermore, this book also embodied detailed discussion on Dakou’s influence from other aspects, for instance, the author thinks feminism and depoliticizing are two main changes created by the popularity of Dakou phenomenon. This reflection leads me to enter into a deeper understanding and makes me consider Dakou phenomenon from a theoretical level, namely its stimulus to human development.

Although I am presenting the same cultural phenomenon with de Kloet, we are holding different concentrations within diverse discipline. De Kloet analyzed this phenomenon in the context of globalization studies, while I performed this research under human ecology subject. That is, I symbolized Dakou phenomenon as a part of social environment to analyze the factors and actors contributed to its formation. Besides, I am also considering whether Dakou phenomenon facilitates the development of its

audience. Moreover, the sustainability of Dakou phenomenon represents one of the concerns of this research, as well. In this way, I put the cultural change, the causes behind it, and its future development as a combination to perform this research.

Another variance with me and de Kloet is the identity, namely I am a typical Chinese post-80 generation and has been deeply cultivated by the Dakou phenomenon, this situation made me conduct this research not only as a scholar, but also as a participant, insider and witness of the Chinese social transition in the past 30 years.

2.3. Policy document analysis

As analysis of the Dakou phenomenon's formation and impact, just as the research objective defined, a reflective understanding on both the phenomenon itself as well as the policies which stimulated its growth is equally important. According to Fischer argued in his *EVALUATION PUBLIC POLICY*, at this stage, the policy itself became the object to be studied (Fischer 1995). Also, according to Bronfenbrenner's saying : "Knowledge and analysis of social policy are essential for progress in developmental research because they alert the investigator to those aspects of the environment, both immediate and more remote, that are most critical for the cognitive, emotional, and social development of the person" (Bronfenbrenner 2009, 8). For this reason, text interpretation on public policies regarding to China's social development, as well as the Customs standards related to import waste from the governmental platform functioned as an overall understanding on how the power preaches the development philosophy to society, and a preparation on evaluation of the actual governmental performance.

Thus, policy-relevant information which has been used in the political setting process, such as the goals the policy designed to achieve and the target population intended to apply need to be identified (Schneider and Ingram 1993). However, as this thesis is not about the evaluation of the policy itself per se, the data collected for policy analysis and the result of such analysis could be to support other statements. Studied policies mainly include *REFORMING AND OPENING-UP POLICY, CHINA'S AGENDA 21, CHINA SUSTAINABLE*

DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2012 and other import and export trade agreements published by China Customs or Ministry of Environmental Protection.

To define the actual development policy and to emphasize the importance of human development to society, at the later phase of this research, I also interpreted several reports regarding to China's social progress and human development. Here I especially refer to the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as my material resources. **CHINA 2020** and **CHINA 2030** are exclusive assembly report published by the World Bank, respectively in 1997 and 2013. The scope of this report covered the historical progress, the current situation, future potentials and challenges situated in China's growth. **CHINA 2020** already pointed out the instability stemming from China's incomplete reforms, and encouraged the government to provide a platform for additional reform, such as enhancing the transparency and predictability of the trade regime. At the same time, the report also seriously enunciates the twin concerns --- the pace and sustainability of China's fast growth (World Bank 1997). In last year's report, in title **BUILDING A MODERN HARMONIOUS AND CREATIVE SOCIETY**, the report again indicated that, by 2030, China has the potential to be a modern, harmonious, and creative high-income society, but only when the government implements a new development strategy in its next phase of development. After more than 30 years of rapid growth since the launch of **REFORMING AND OPENING-UP**, China has reached a turning point in its development path when a second strategic, and no less fundamental, shift is called for (World Bank 2013). Interpretation on these two reports helped me feature the inconsistency existing in China's policies, reforms and development strategy, offered me more concrete evidence before making a conclusion.

Besides, talking about the absence of human development in Chinese public policies needs to set a benchmark for what is the genuine human development, and how this concept is connected with the cultural context. Based on this intention, I involved Human Development Reports (HDR) from UNDP as supplementary material on text interpretation. I intended to emphasize their reports in 2004 and 2010, as then they

came up with the concept of cultural liberty in today's diverse world and the core value of human to the society.

2.4. Interviews

Seven semi-structured interviews had been carried out during this research; people come from different fields and thus represented diverse standpoints on Dakou phenomenon. Three of them are Dakou enthusiasts; others are a Customs staff; a music critic; a feature documentary director and a Dakou dealer. Since me and my informants were all based in different places during the whole process of this research, so all the interviews were conducted by telephone or through emails. As even in doing a case study, the evidence from different perspectives will increase the chances that a case will be exemplary (Yin 2009), so I suppose diverse sources could make this research more comprehensive and credible.

The expanding of my informants' network was more difficult than I expected. I plan to include more respondents represent different perspectives to enrich the information; therefore I can get more insightful perspective on the Dakou phenomenon. At first, my research on exploring respondents kept unrewarding for a long time until one day I randomly read a blog article from Angelina, who a big enthusiast of Dakou CD since she was in high school and works as a journalist in China right now. She is probably the most dedicated Dakou fan I have ever known, and the deep affection of Dakou she presented in this article interested me very much. So I was holding the mind to at least try and emailed her. Surprisingly, she responded ardently and then introduced me to more informants she thought might support my thesis. This helped me a lot during the entire research process, and her answers during the interview also provided me many perceptions on Dakou phenomenon. Another breakthrough was I got in touch with Kunlu, the director of the feature documentary *Nirvana and Pulp: A Story of Scrapped CDs*², she directed this last year as her graduation project when she graduated from the University of Westminster (Li 2014). Through her; I reached a famous Chinese music

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXnqoa4osOk>

critic, who has been deeply changed by Dakou phenomenon. In this way, I was introduced to more connections who work in this business, and I step by step built up my informants' network.

As I mentioned in the Scope and Limitation section, interview the Dakou dealer is the most challenging phase in this research. Although the Chinese government has not expressly prohibited the selling of Dakou CDs, from time to time it still piles on these dealers. So I could understand his difficulty and hesitation owing to the nature of the business. Then some other informants told me that, in recent years, the business have been even quicker declining due to the stricter government restriction on media market and the weakened fervor of the consumer group. All stores have been converted to secretive or online sale. Another truth is; the dealer doesn't see this business a decent profession, he knows he walks on the margin line, for him, this is just a survival tool; there is nothing worth talking or discussing (Li 2014). All these defensive and objectionable reactions from the dealer on the one hand make the talk with him more difficult, but on the other hand, provide me a totally opposite perception compared with other informants.

2.5. Other materials

Data used in this thesis were gathered from a variety of sources based on reliability and availability. However, as I already stated in the Scope and Limitation section, I encountered some problems on collecting quantitative data so there will not be a lot of numerical data in this thesis. I will only use a minor amount of statistics regarding the annual quantity and value of imported plastic waste, which I obtained from China Customs statistics. However, the quantitative data here was used merely as evidence or proof to support the specific discussion. Besides, I also use the feature documentary *NIRVANA AND PULP: A STORY OF SCRAPPED CDs* directed by Kunlu Li as my supplement material, some contents from this documentary will be used in the findings part to strengthen my conclusion.

3. Theoretical Framework

The research subject on Chinese Dakou phenomenon is well-matched with the study of human ecology. As the discipline discussing the relationship of human and its natural, social and built environments (Young 1974), it is important to have a comprehensive understanding how human, and these environments may promote or demote each other's development during the evolution process. Mentioning the formation of Dakou phenomenon is reflecting the indivisible and complex relationship of involved factors and actors. In this section, I will explain for what reason I have chosen these specific theories and concepts as the structuring principles to apply into this thesis.

The rise of Dakou phenomenon discussed in this thesis was firstly caused by the trade of imported waste. Meanwhile, the biased development policy and the absence of government supervision give it a rise of widespread and popularity of Dakou. Therefore, I will start with the *RUBBISH THEORY* came up by Michael Thompson and the book *WASTE AND WANT: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF TRASH* written by Susan Strasser to address different meanings of waste to diverse groups of people. Then, I sought to construct two leading relations in this theoretical framework to demonstrate the possibility of this phenomenon's occurrence: one is the individual agency and structure from sociology perspective; another is the public policy and human development under the entire ecological system. Take into account this perception, a discourse of the concept agency, structure and their relation with the culture will be included into this theoretical framework. I am mainly using Hewson's article *AGENCY* in *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CASE STUDY RESEARCH*, Barker's book *CULTURAL STUDIES: THEORY AND PRACTICE* and Ratner's work *AGENCY AND CULTURE* into this part. At this point, I want to draw attention to the importance of individual agency and the potential inspired by it to make a specific cultural formation happen. Subsequently, I am mainly adapting the human ecology theory from the human development perspective into this thesis for its conception of the developing individual, of the environment, and especially of the evolving interaction between the two (Bronfenbrenner 2009). And I am consciously using Urie

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory to explain the importance of appropriate public policy for the individual's development. Thirdly, the formation of Dakou is based on a complex chain; this is a dynamic development process. Therefore I am also employing HDR from UNDP to address the basic principles of human development. Lastly, to evaluate the sustainability of Dakou phenomenon, I am using the different dimensions of sustainable development to analyze the possibility of its future existence.

3.1. Different meanings of waste

Michael Thompson contends that rubbish is socially defined, and describes the same object may have different values, or non-values, for different groups in society (1979). He suggests that to understand rubbish, we need to explore the changing relationships between status, the possession of objects and the ability to disregard them. In addition, it is important to acknowledge the shifting economic values of "scrap", what is rubbish in one context can have real economic value in another, with rubbish definitions and associated economics being astonishingly malleable.

The Dakou CDs came to China in the name of imported waste; however it has more meanings than the waste itself. At different stages of the formation of Dakou phenomenon, these CDs get new meanings from diverse groups of people, as they have distinct aims and agencies. According to Strasser: daily experience suggests trash is a dynamic category; the line between rancid and not, edible and spoiled, pure and impure is a matter for cultural and personal debate (2000). Waste is a definition based on the relationship of demand and supply. People in other cultures and at other times may evaluate waste in totally different standards. These CDs are evaluated as surplus and trash in developed countries, but they are regarded as valuable cultural products on the media market when they arrived in China. With the change of their status and possession, they are given an extra chance to be valuable and meaningful.

3.2. The power of agency

Understanding the rise of agency in the process of Dakou phenomenon's formation is very important in this thesis. According to Hewson's work, agency refers to "the experience of acting, doing things, making things happen, and exerting power, being the subject of events, or controlling things. It is one aspect of human experience. As people are both actors and acted upon, the interplay between agency and its context is a central issue in case study research across all the disciplines" (2010, 12). On the contrary, structure is the recurrent patterned arrangements which influence or limit the choices and opportunities available (Barker 2003). The relation between agency and structure may be seen as a struggle of socialization against autonomy in determining whether an individual acts as a free agent or in a manner dictated by the social structure.

The concept of agency has commonly been associated with following notions, such as freedom; free will; action; creativity; originality and the very possibility of change through the actions of free agents (ibid.). When these notions effected on Chinese youth, the change brought to them is, they are situating in a condition of activity rather than passivity (Hewson 2010). They began using independent capability or ability to act on thinking and deciding in what way they wish to live their lives. Agency always works its effectiveness within and through a specific social structure; there have to be some triggers to motivate it. The fast but biased social development happened in China located the environmental possibility for the public to bring up their cognitive composition in this period. And this stimulated the action of the individual agency.

The relation constructed between agency and culture is that, an individual characteristic operates outside of culture and is designed to liberate the individual from cultural constraints (Ratner 2010). With the wide spread of Dakou phenomenon, more and more Chinese youth started to learn to examine and ponder their accustomed environment and culture. And steadily cultivate the behavior on independent thinking and self-determining judgment. In this way, the role of agency in the culture can be simplified as people are not passive recipients of an epitomized object named culture. Relatively,

people participate as a dynamic role in producing and reproducing culture, and the manner in which their psychology is then culturally organized (Ibid.). Scholars who advocate active agency takes it as constructing individual, personal acts and attitudes. From a cultural perspective, agency is "the temporarily constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations" (Emirbayer and Mische 2010; Ratner 2010, 8). This conception of agency provides a chance for individuals to participate in the cultural construction. Accordingly, agency makes and remakes culture through creating personal meanings about the significance of things and through acts such as choosing particular kinds of friendships, jobs, or consumer products.

3.3. Ecological system theory

When I am talking about human development in this thesis, I am clearly referring to a particular process of intellectual, cognitive and psychological development established by the cultural change, and I am trying to describe it from the perspective of each of these spheres. I am specifically using the texts from *THE ECOLOGY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: EXPERIMENTS BY NATURE AND DESIGN* by Urie Bronfenbrenner to support my arguments. Bronfenbrenner epitomized the study of human development, before him, related disciplines had only separate studies: Child psychologists studied the child; sociologists examined the family, anthropologists the society, economists the economic framework of the times and political scientists the structure. As the consequence of Bronfenbrenner's groundbreaking concept of the ecology of human development, these environments -- from the family to economic and political structures -- were viewed as part of the life course; embracing both childhood and adulthood (Lang 2005). Bronfenbrenner understood the process of human development as being shaped by the interaction between an individual and his or her environment. The specific path of development was a result of the influences of a people's surroundings, such as their

families, peers, schools, works, and cultures. He saw the advance formed in childhood and youth would have an enormous impact on one's adult life.

Based on his view of human development, Urie Bronfenbrenner had been engaged in a concerted effort to develop a theoretical and operational model for investigating the role of the environment in shaping human development (Bronfenbrenner 1999). It was from this vantage point that Bronfenbrenner conceived his theory of human development, the ecological system theory. In his most well-known work *THE ECOLOGY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT* he described the individual's environment as "... a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner 2009). Four levels of environmental systems (see Figure 4) differentiated on the basis of their immediacy with respect to the developing person, are positioned: micro-, meso-, exo and macrosystems (Bubolz and Sontag 1993). He later accounted for the influence of time, such as specific events and changes in culture over time, by adding the Chronosystem to the theory (Berger 2012). Bronfenbrenner (1993, 37) explained these models as, *"In order to understand human development; one must consider the entire ecological system in which growth occurs. This system is composed of five socially organized subsystems that help support and guide human growth. They range from the microsystem, which refers to the relationship between a developing person and the immediate environment, such as school and family, to the macro system, which refers to institutional patterns of culture, such as the economy, customs, and bodies of knowledge"*.

As shown below, micro-, meso-, and exosystems are embedded in the macrosystem, which refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies (Bronfenbrenner 2009). The significance of the macrosystem lies in the broad ideological values, norms, and institutional patterns of a particular culture that makes up the "blueprints" for the

culture's ecology of human development (Bubolz and Sontag 1993). At the same time, it motivates all the interactions of all other layers.

Under the macrosystem; Bronfenbrenner stated several elements, which may influence human development. Among them, public policy was evaluated as a factor to influence human development through an indirect way. Different from some other scholars' view, who thought public policy is too distant to have an effect on human development, Bronfenbrenner firstly posted his opinion that public policy is a part of the macrosystems that occur at the level of "everyday life and steer the course of behavior and development" (Bronfenbrenner 1992, 352). Its influence towards people is regularly revealed through the stimulus on other three immediate systems.

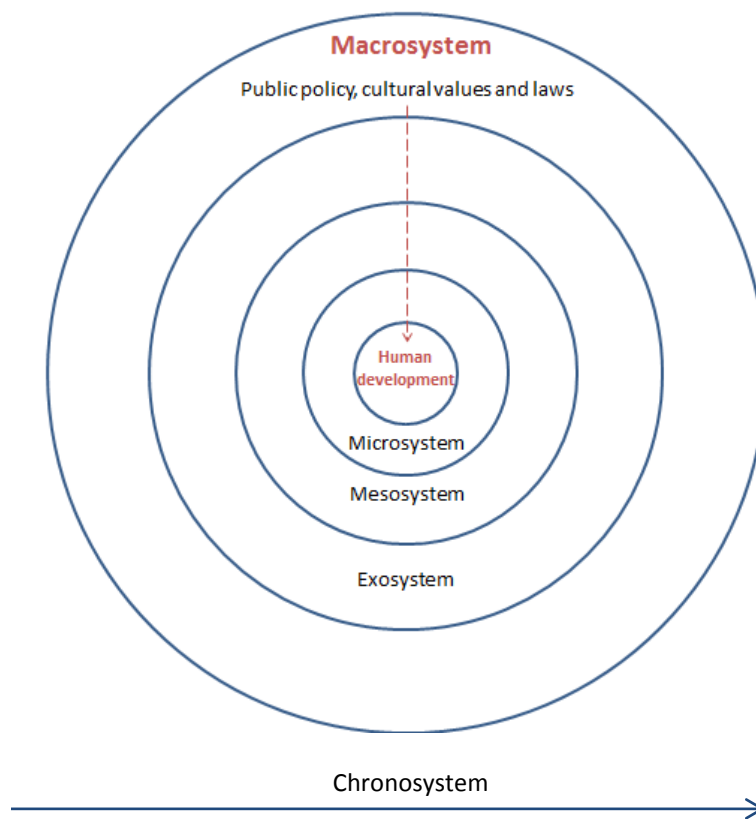


Figure 4 Bronfenbrenner's human development system

Moreover, he pointed out the importance of proper social policy to shape people's development through stimulating human potentials besides genetic-decided portion.

According to his study, many human beings may possess genetic potentials for development significantly beyond those that they are presently manifesting, and that such unrealized potentials might be actualized through social policies and programs that enhance exposure to proximal processes in environmental settings providing the stability and resources that enable such processes to be maximally effective (Bronfenbrenner 2009). Effective policy may excite unrealized possibility; on the contrary, inclined development strategy obstructs the function of human potential.

3.4. The basic principles regarding human development

This thesis has connected the investigation of Dakou phenomenon with an evaluation of Chinese development policy, to reflect the absence of the multicultural policy in relation to human development (UNDP 2004). As a result, the content of HDR from the UNDP has been largely utilized into analysis. UNDP published its first HDR since 1990, together with the Human Development Index (HDI). The main principle of the HDI considered the “national development should be measured not simply by national income, but also by life expectancy” (UNDP 2010, iv). Diverse theme connected to human development has been deeply discussed in every annual report since 1990. Regarding the topic of this thesis, the importance of sufficient cultural supply has been seen as a main consideration when a country is chasing the social development.

The central objective of the HDR for the past two decades has always been to emphasize that development is primarily and fundamentally about people (Ibid.). The definition of human development in the first HDR is: “people are the real wealth of a nation. The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to live long, healthy and creative lives. This may appear to be a simple truth. Nonetheless, it is often forgotten in the immediate concern with the accumulation of commodities and financial wealth” (Ibid., 12). The social development cannot be accomplished without resting the importance of the human as its priority. Placing people at the centre of development means making people “to be active participants” in the change, it is also about people’s active engagement in shaping development, equity

and sustainability, intrinsic aspects of the freedom people have to lead lives they have reason to value (UNDP 2010, 5-6). Over pursuing the high-speed economic growth, while disregarding the core value of human in the process of societal development, as what China is doing right now, will ultimately turn to endanger the economic increase (World Bank 2013).

Constructing the resourceful environment to promote human development includes “respecting diversity and building more inclusive societies by adopting policies that explicitly recognize cultural differences—multicultural policies” (UNDP 2004, 2). When using the excuse for protecting domestic cultures and traditions to reject introducing new elements from other cultures, for instance the music, the authority should understand that the “sense of identity and belonging to a group with shared values and other bonds of culture is important for all individuals, but each individual can identify with many different groups” (Ibid., 3). Responsible governance should actively take the initiative to break the cultural boundaries among different countries and ideologies (Blunt 1995), to construct a cultural circumstance with enough freedom and diversity in public, instead of shutting all the opportunities to retrieve another culture and ideology.

3.5. Dimensions of sustainable development

The most commonly cited definition on sustainable development is the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UN 1986). However, this is not only a broad concept; it can be applied to any dynamic development process by defining it in a holistic systems sense (Bossel 1999). In this way, the various constraints that restrict possible development paths to accessibility space may be pointed out (Ibid.). The particular contribution of the concept of sustainable development is that it emphasizes respect for cultural values and, thus, does not see economic indicators as the sole measure of development (UNESCO 2010). Rather, sustainable development represents the balanced integration of social and environmental objectives with economic development. It requires simultaneous and balanced progress in four dimensions that

are totally interdependent, which are social, economic, ecological and political. If we use these four dimensions to evaluate the development of Dakou phenomenon, there are at least three actors involved, which are the government, the dealers, and the audience. Any sector changes on this link may result in a corresponding change to the Dakou phenomenon.

Furthermore, continuing to maintain and further open markets should be a cornerstone of China's sustainable development (World Bank 2013). One supportive key element to guarantee this is sufficient access for public to the social services (Ibid.). Therefore, the government needs to enhance the quality of "public participation in the reform and development process" (Ibid., 65). The absence of public participation in the social development will result in threatening China loses its competitiveness on the global market.

4. Findings and analysis

Dakou's meaning to this thesis is more than a definition; it is a cultural change, a yearning to liberty and a remarkable generation. Therefore I use different terms related to Dakou in findings and analysis to distinguish diverse ranges of discussion. *Dakou business* refers to the distribution and selling of the Dakou CDs on the media market. *Dakou generation* is a group of Chinese young people, whose growing process was accompanied by the rise of Dakou business. The ideology of freedom and democracy embodied with the music, encouraged this generation to consciously construct a distinctive culture. Different with the conventional cultures which preached by the government, Dakou culture advocates liberty, personality and independence. Lastly, the *Dakou phenomenon* is an integration of all the above, acted as a part of the social environment influenced the relationship between individuals and their built environment. In this thesis, the social environment refers to the immediate physical and social setting in which people live or in which something happens or develops (Barnett and Casper 2001). It includes the culture that the individual was educated or lives in,

and the people and institutions with whom they interact (Ibid.). The Dakou phenomenon is firstly attached with the physical being as Dakou CDs. It constructed a setting, in which the Dakou generation interacts with different music and cultures. Through communication and interaction under this environment, the Dakou generation progressively constructed their values and characteristics. In this section, I will represent the findings for research questions raised in this thesis.

4.1. What have being the structural and individual drivers and actors involved in the Dakou phenomenon?

“In China there is a saying that goes ‘Wherever there is pressure, there will be fights’. So when politics imposes more control, things develop more quickly. “
-----China with a cut, Jeroen de Kloet, 2010

The formation of Dakou phenomenon is built on a chain of several factors. Diverse agencies and power have been identified in this process (see Figure 5). During the application of *REFORMING AND OPENING-UP*, the government is aiming to achieve fast social development. However, on the contrary with the rapid development of the economy, rigid cultural controls are always prevailed in China. People are in lack of contacts with multicultural products (Campbell 2011). On the other hand, for the management of the trade on imported waste, that represents the absence of regulatory control. This creates a sufficient supply of Dakou CDs into the black market (Customs staff 2014). Besides, different agencies have been arising in this period. Part of corrupt Customs staff, together with the Dakou dealers, keeps maintaining the Dakou business. They are in seeking of great wealth. In the meantime, Dakou phenomenon fostered the interest of many Chinese youth towards Western culture. They began to pursue freedom and different lifestyles. In addition, the Dakou CD has changed its original property as imported waste during this process. Different aims and agencies have “sorted” (Strasser 2000) it into something valuable and useful. In China, these wastes got a second chance to be reshaped as audiovisual products.

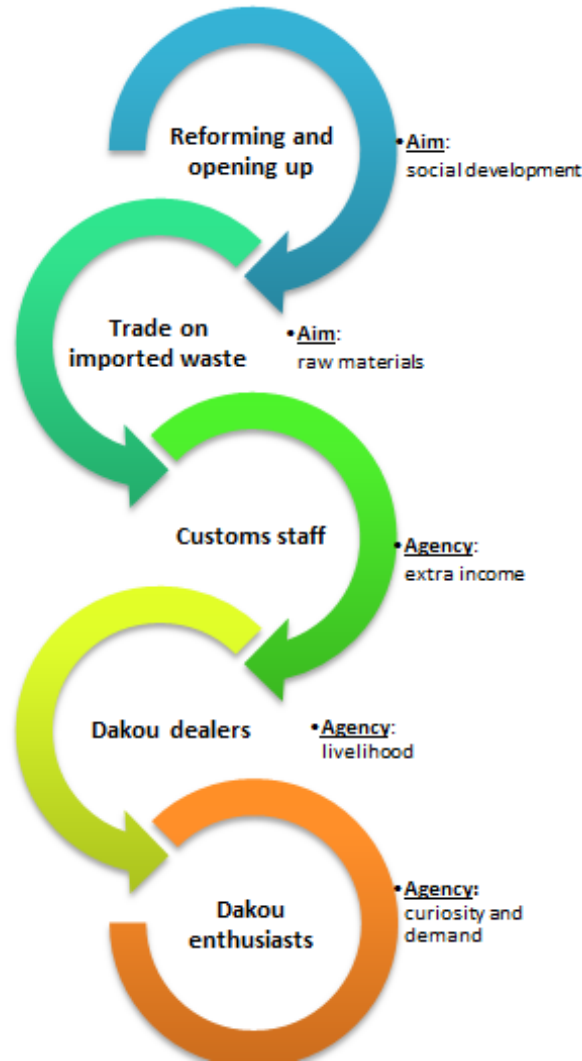


Figure 5 the formation chain of Dakou phenomenon

4.1.1. Cultural constraints on media market

Since the application of *REFORMING AND OPENING-UP*, a lot of “new commercial activities were legitimized by changes in political philosophy and attitudes” (World Bank 1997, 10). However, quite opposite scenario has been arisen on China’s media market during the same time period; the government has seldom in an official way to create more possibilities for the public to obtain access with other cultures outside China. As one of the most important carriers of cultural exchanges, audiovisual products’ entering to China is, in fact, very difficult during the whole time, these products include all “audio-video tapes, gramophone records, compact and laser discs etc., on which contents are recorded” (General Administration of Press and Publication and General Administration

of China Customs 2011). Since the 1990s, marginal media market has been made by strict cultural constraints; it exhibits a top-down structure under this specific social structure. However, this structure gave Dakou an opportunity to raise as a novelty, like Wang and de Kloet argues, “1990s was actually an era that threw people into illusions, blindness, and horror, but this new [Dakou phenomenon] thought appeals to shallowness and arrogance, exerting itself to cover a chaotic, bitter reality and at least to temporarily relieve anxieties” (de Kloet 2010, 21). Actually, the entire overseas audiovisual products market was nearly blank until 1995; when the record company Jingwen³ introduced the album *DAYDREAM* of Mariah Carey.

Even till today, even China is already “in the midst of the maelstrom of capitalism, the state has held a firm grip on, or better, is part and parcel of, the media industry” (Ibid., 190). According to *THE MEASURES FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF IMPORT OF AUDIO AND VIDEO PRODUCTS*, there are at least ten categories audiovisual products are strictly forbidden to introduce into China:

- *objecting the basic principles of the Constitution;*
- *harming national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity;*
- *disclosing of state secrets, endanger national security or harm national honor and interests*
- *inciting to ethnic hatred or ethnic discrimination, undermining national unity, or infringe upon national customs and habits;*
- *promoting cults or superstition;*
- *disrupting social order and undermine social stability;*
- *propagating obscenity, gambling, violence or instigate crimes;*
- *insulting or slandering others, infringing upon the legitimation and others’ interests of;*
- *threatening public morality or national cultural tradition;*
- *containing contents which are prohibited by state regulations and laws*

³ Beijing Jingwen Communication Co. Ltd., founded in 1994

An actual evaluation indicates the complex censorship system cited in these measurements can be found from a business handbook published by the U.S. Commercial Service, “In general; it can take an average of two years or possibly longer before Chinese audiences are able to see American dramas on TV” (2013, 67).

Moderate supervision on media market can protect and inheritance domestic and traditional cultures, however, overstretch cultural constraints can ultimately “threaten to undermine China’s efforts at becoming an innovative and internationally competitive economy” (World Bank 2013, 25). On a very fundamental level, the government should consider whether the current resources and approaches on the media market are acceptable and satisfactory before deciding to what extent it tightens up the control.

4.1.2. Problematic management on imported waste

More specific information regarding from where and how many Dakou CDs flowing into China could be valuable for this research. However, although a lot of efforts have been made, it is impossible to trace the detailed information on these Dakou CDs after they unloaded from containers. Many years of dealing have “created a complete underground complex industrial chain of the Dakou business” (Customs staff 2014). Usually, these CDs were exported to different ports to China; some dealers who have bought off the Customs staff will firstly transferred these CDs to Shantou in Guangdong province, a city where has been established as the biggest distribution center of Dakou CD (see Figure 6).



Figure 6 Shantou, Guangdong, China ©OpenStreetMap contributors

Then more dealers who do not have direct acquaintance with the Customs will purchase these CDs across these dealers at wholesale price, usually “it is 400 RMB for 250 CDs” (Yang 2014). Through this way, these Dakou CDs increasingly spread on the black market all over China, commonly in the retail price 10-15 RMB. The doing of Dakou itself collectively refers to an act of destruction of all audiovisual products, but in a variety ways; it can be drilling holes (see Figure 7), completely pulverizing or cutting a random cut. There are two main actors who will implement this specific operation on destruction; either the foreign record companies, or Chinese Customs. The former is meant for “protection of intellectual property rights” (Li 2014), and the latter one is to give these CDs a recognizable mark as waste.



Figure 7 Dakou CD with a drilling hole

Although these CDs appeared on the black market were imported in the name of recyclable plastic waste, they do not have a particular imported commodity code, as they do not belong to a separate category of plastic waste. As stated by the standards of China Customs, according to different attributes, imported plastic waste is classified as: “plastic and articles” and “waste, parings and scrap of plastics” (Customs-info 2009). A general amount and value in the latter classification can be seen from the following chart (see Figure 8).

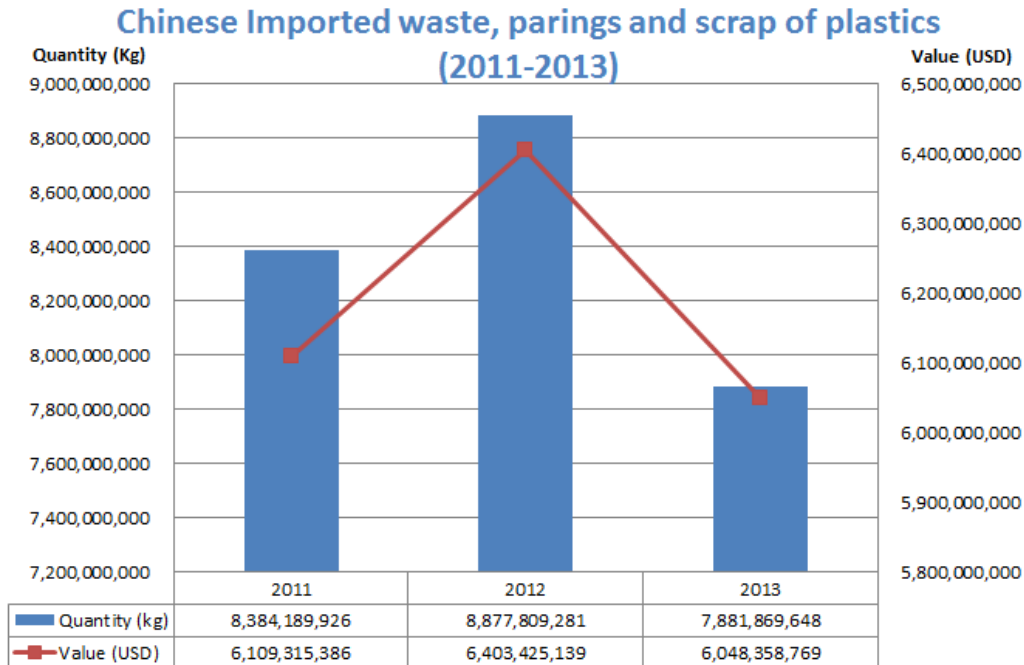


Figure 8 Chinese imported plastic wastes (Source: Chinese customs statistics compiled by the author)

Under this classification, there are another four subgroups based on different components of the plastics, but in which category the CDs are, it is untraceable. Furthermore, “beneficiaries, both the dealers and the bribed staff, usually falsely declare the property when entering through the Customs for avoiding inspection” (Customs staff 2014). Therefore, there is no estimated number to see how many Dakou CDs have been flowed into China.

Untraceable number on imported waste is not only an obstacle in this thesis for accounting for the specific number of Dakou CDs. And undetectable quantity is a “typical problem in the current situation of the entire Chinese imported waste industry” (Customs staff 2014). Behind the huge economic interests, it is the chaotic management system. There is a popular saying in the circle of Dakou enthusiasts: “This kind of existence of music is the best luck and the deepest sadness for Chinese music fans.” Precisely because of the problematic management and bureaucratic culture (World Bank 2013) on the managing of the imported waste, there is a possibility for Dakou CDs’ continuous leaking into the market.

Currently, there are two basic regulations regarding the trade on imported waste: the “*LAW OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION BY SOLID WASTE*”, and the “*INTERIM PROVISION ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN THE IMPORTATION OF WASTE MATERIALS*”, both of them were legislated in 1996. Besides, there are also an import licensing system, and several announced standards, guidelines regarding the imported waste. However, a wave of incidents including ship-backs problem, persistent smuggling, abnormal cottage industries (Yoshida 2005), dangerous working environment⁴, and inappropriate process of e-waste is still occupying a large amount of news reports. The trade on imported waste, including its subsequent recycling industry is challenging the Chinese governance capability, and evidently, more effective actions besides legislation are yet to be carried out (Yao et al. 2009). Standardized management, strict import classification, stronger supervision, more incorruptible organization, and further transparency on information sharing are in urgent need.

4.1.3. Different agencies are in action

The practice of *REFORMING AND OPENING –UP* opened the locking door of China to the outside world, a certain degree of openness and knowledge has been incorporated into China since then. This expanded people’s possibilities and promoted their creativity and imagination (UNDP 2010). As Figure 5 showed, different agencies have been revealed in this period. The Customs staff is seeking extra income; some of them are willing to cooperate with Dakou dealers, since this is an easier way to get the money. On the other hand, Dakou dealers are seeking for more wealth as well. Although such business may be caught by the police, or even risk of sentencing to jail, “because of the interest driven, there are still many people willing to rush into danger” (Customs staff 2014). Chinese youth, who is interested into Dakou culture, they are seeking for diversities in life. The emergence of Dakou phenomenon gives them a chance to know about Western cultures.

⁴ See the chapter PLASTIC LAND in JUNKYARD PLANET by Adam Minter

The strict cultural constraints blocked the necessity to cultivate the increasing creativity and imagination (Hays 1994). This contradiction between alteration and restricting of existing sociological system challenges the forms of social organization, belief systems, and lifestyles prevailing in a particular culture or subculture (Bronfenbrenner 2009). No matter what is the expectation from the government to individuals, stronger consciousness and subjective initiative are already under deliberation. Intentionality, power and rationality (Hewson 2010), which are three main properties awaken agency, are increasingly brewing.

The emergence of Dakou culture is seemingly accidental but has its unshakeable inevitability, which is the arising agency rested in the Chinese public. The “action logically involves power in the sense of transformative capacity” (Giddens 2013, 15). Even if there was no rise of Dakou phenomenon, other forms of demonstration to express aspirations of agency cannot be excluded, as either way of agency will always be manifest “in cultural and artistic pursuits” (UNDP 2013, 15). The social circumstances and the preconditions for activating individual agency make the awaken creativity and imaginary irresistible, and pushing people to break the shackles of control and to seek more openness on their sights towards the outside world, to construct more possibility to give free rein to their identity.

The expression of agency may differ while times changing, however, its existence will not be eliminated, it always in the interaction with the social environment. To some extent, this dynamic interaction is also determined by the nature of culture: “Culture is not a frozen set of values and practices. It is constantly recreated as people question, adapt and redefine their values and practices to changing realities and exchanges of ideas” (UNDP 2004, 4). For a long time, Chinese youth, has already become accustomed to cultivating their pursuits towards different cultures through their own ways. And buying Dakou CD was merely the initial stage for young people to chase more “cultural liberty” (Ibid.) under the strict control of media market. When new technology became more accessible around the new millennium, even cheaper alternatives were offered

(U.S. Commercial Service 2013). A lot of foreign music, movies and dramas in China then got widely spread through Internet by cracking a gateway or via pirated DVDs. And nowadays, these approaches are gradually decreasing the heat of Dakou CDs among consumers.

4.2. How does the Dakou phenomenon influence the relationship between individuals and their built environment?

4.2.1. Dakou is more than a cut in the CD

“In the intellectual circle, people have a preference using “generation” to divide a period; this page represents the dawning of a new era. When Dakou became the main access for youth knowing about rock music, this generation has become famished nestlings, searching for a sound fastened in their sentiment. And when all the fantasizing voices are reached out, it is about time to strip off the taboo.”

-----On the fore page of Beijing Xincheng (Beijing New Sound), author’s translation

A generation, who was born in the late 1970s and the 1980s, is the main follower of the Dakou phenomenon. This generation is the main force constructed the Dakou culture, as well as the witness of the flourishing period of the Dakou phenomenon (de Kloet 2010). In the phrase of Dakou, “da stands for strike, break, smash, attack, and kou stands for opening, entrance, cut” (de Kloet 2005, 616). However, this cut “is not just a cut in a CD, but an identity bordering on the permissible” (de Kloet 2010, 21).

Since firstly stepping into China in the 1990s, Dakou CD soon spread popularity among Chinese youth and musicians. These CD made more foreign singers and bands become familiar with the Chinese youth; both major and minor are included (Gough 2003).

Dakou became a subculture for those youth, who are pursuing wider selection on music information and music styles; it is considered a unique carrier of alternative cultures in the 20th century in China. There is an anonymous description of Dakou from an internet

forum, which is quite worth a lengthy citing⁵; it uses lot of metaphors to describe what Dakou on earth is:

“Dakou cassettes, Dakou CDs, Dakou videos, Dakou, Dakou dealers, Dakou consumers, Dakou musicians, Dakou critics, Dakou magazines..... What a Dakou world! This is a new life experiencing the adventurous spirit without going abroad. When Americans gave themselves a deep cut, they presented a chance for the rest of the world to be gathered and united. The government disapproved the development of rock music for 1.3 billion people, and then a group of them has to secretly nurture their ears, nurture their eyes, nurture their brains and nurture their generation. Cannot go through openly? Then do it secretly! On this wasted-plastic-cutted CD, someone is building their houses, someone is driving their limos, someone is starving, and someone is eating bullet. Dakou makes someone rich, someone poor, and someone becomes spirited-strong. When the naive domestic recording industry began to distribute so-called popular but outdated music, the Dakou generation glimpsed and steered. Dakou opened a window for this generation to breathe some fresh air; (...) Dakou made them keep the pace with the world. (...) Dakou subverted the normal order of music; it appeared so unconscious, but made music so intimately with life, especially those young people’s life” (Baike 2014).

4.2.2. The Dakou generation

The first time there appeared the term of “Dakou generation” is in 1999, “China’s most prolific rock critic; artist and entrepreneur Yan Jun published, together with Ou Ning, an overview of the bands he considered emblematic of what they coined as the **BEIJING NEW SOUND**” (Yan, Ou, and Nie 1999; de Kloet 2010, 19). This characterizes “a generation that refuses to be suppressed that seeks unseeingly; that connects to the underground that creates marginal culture and lifestyle that grows stubbornly that resists and struggles” (Ibid., 21). This description is just one side of being Dakou, as it celebrates the rebellious. But actually, “Dakou culture is more diverse and more

⁵ de Kloet also quoted this paragraph in his book CHINA WITH A CUT, but we translated differently from the original Chinese text.

ambiguous” (de Kloet 2010, 21). Dakou culture nurtured Chinese youth more than leading them go rebellious and defiant. It projected different emotions in different people, provided joyful and enjoyment, and encouraged people to chase what they desire.

I interviewed three Dakou enthusiasts during the whole case study. They come from different backgrounds, have different music tastes and contacted Dakou through different ways. While they are just three individual among the tens of thousands of Dakou enthusiasts, but they have some typical character could justify that to some extent, Dakou culture expanded the possibilities during their growth. Dakou culture offered them a possibility to contact Western cultures, cultivated them a more objective perspective to observe the entire world.

A pious devotee

My network of interviewee would be jammed if I have not read Angelina’s article on a blog, her honest words inspired me to discover further stories from more Dakou enthusiasts to have a comprehensive understanding on how Dakou culture shaped these Chinese youth. 14 years ago, she deliberately went to Shantou, the city which had been regarded as the most important source of Dakou CDs in China, to go to university. However, this journey from home to school is never an easy one; approximately 2400 kilometers’ route (see Figure 9) means “40 hours train and 6 hours bus” (Qu 2014).

In that blog, she expressed her entrenched emotion with Dakou rather undisguisedly: *“Every Chinese Dakou enthusiast knows that those CDs come from Shantou, and I am already here, on the CDs resource. I chose Shantou University, just for these Dakou CDs--the paranoid in a certain object, equates the faith, it is an unspeakable joy, that feeling just as those atheists don’t understand the Jews’ crying in front of the Western wall or the Tibetans’ prostrating ” (Qu 2014, author’s translation).*

How waste became fortune in the Chinese Dakou phenomenon



Figure 9 Angelina's route to the Dakou city, Shantou ©OpenStreetMap contributors

Dakou gives Angelina a quite different way to evaluate her life. She imagined her life ought to be free and dramatic as those legend musicians and she used to set 27 years old as a turning point in her life, by that time, she should be a mother, or just die: *“Instead of saying I had a strong fancy on rock and roll at that time, rather than to say that I was so addicted to that lifestyle. (...) In an age still with the teenager’s gloss, all I want is to live as a rocker and to be unbridled, so unbridled that I can even devote my life to it. I want to be Kurt Cobain⁶ or Jim Morrison⁷, to have a baby or to die at the age 27”* (Qu 2014, author's translation).

By the time I read her article; Angelina already has a happy family and adorable child. As she used to dream, she succeeded to be a mother at the age 27. For her, “death and have children are same as a way of farewell: all the spiky, uncompromising, and injuries, from the moment being a mother, had been abandoned” (Qu 2014). When I talked with her, she still uses some tough words like a rocker occasionally to answer my questions, but surprisingly, she can easily switch into the role of a tender mother when I mentioned her child.

⁶ American musician and artist, the lead singer and guitarist of the band Nirvana, died in age 27

⁷ American singer-songwriter and poet, the lead singer of the band The Doors, died in age 27

Angelina's first contact with Dakou CD started from "some short segments of foreign music from a magazine" (Qu 2014). Then someday, she suddenly found a street dealer who has the entire album covers that song. That is the Original Sound Track of the movie *THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT*. Her excitement cannot be expressed in words, and the most surprising thing to her is the disc even has an automatic player. Since then, the addiction to Dakou has been deeply rooted in her life. And as an enthusiast of Dakou, she felt herself is much more awesome⁸ than those people who do not listen to Dakou CD. Compared with those people, she has "completely different circle of friends and a different attitude towards life" (Qu 2014).

One goal of human development is, wherever possible, raises standards and expands people's choices in all key dimensions; from health and livelihoods to the personal freedom, to control and improve one's own life (UNDP 2013). The spirit of freedom in Dakou culture has shaped Angelina in many ways. Her independence and bravery encourage her to make her own choices on the life path and to be a person she wanted to be. Most quality of her is probably uncommon in traditional Chinese cultures or unacceptable to the elder generation. But eventually, she handles everything and makes her dreams come true.

A different rocker

I did not know Qian until a good friend introduced me to him. Qian deeply loves rock and roll since he was a teenager and had a short experience of dealing Dakou CDs when he was in university (see Figure 10); however that was only a part-time job which can offer him some economic support when he went to music festivals.

Now he lives in Los Angeles, a lot of things have changed. Nonetheless, the essence which Dakou brought is still accompanying with him. During the interview, Qian emphasized that the influence of Dakou "does not come from the item itself; it is the rock music influenced that generation" (Yang 2014). For Qian, the emergence of Dakou

⁸ She actually used a much stronger word in Chinese, 牛逼, and I couldn't offer a proper English translation. This is a similar expression to dirty word to deliver intense emotion.

is “out of sudden” (Ibid.), back to 1990s, most thoughts in rock music are similar with his. And since then, everyone began to hear rock music.

Referring to rock music, Qian also has a lot of his own ideas. He claims that, to some extent, rock music could shape people’s characteristics. Unusually with common thoughts, the rock spirit gives people more tolerant and peaceful mind: *“People usually think rockers are hot-tempered and to evaluate them as hooligans, when rockers get together; people would say, oh that’s a hooligans’ party! However, actually it’s quite opposite. (...) A funny truth is, the longer you hear rock and roll; you no longer want to communicate with other people [who don’t hear this kind of music], it is like you slowly constructed your personal space.”*



Figure 10 Qian's Dakou CD stall on Modern Sky Festival⁹, Beijing, 2007

Since he lives abroad now; the resources are richer, and he does not have to buy Dakou CDs anymore. But the habit on buying CD never stops. The music still occupies a lot of space and enjoyment of his life even now. He keeps an interesting habit, as long as he gets up every morning; he needs to immediately turn on the music. And he also told me, although he always lives in big cities, used to be Beijing and now Los Angeles, he never hates traffic jam. As that is a perfect timing he can put some favorite music on and enjoy.

⁹ An annual open-air rock festival in Beijing since 2007

Qian evaluates Dakou as a positive thing back to the 1990s in China. For Chinese young people, that is a “cool thing”, and they supposed to like it (Ibid.) In Qian’s perspective, young people are supposed to be involved into this kind of activity, listen to the rock music, and group a band, and to be different with those common things. *“Dakou phenomenon itself is not a profound thing with lots of inner beauties; it is just unique and distinctive compared with those familiar but useless things we knew all the time since we were little kids. What people got from Dakou is not a fast food culture; who loved it, will always love it.”*

Enable growth and empower people to pursue many diverse life paths, thus developing human capabilities are always vital for human development (UNDP 2010). However, becoming a minority in majority or to prominent personality through many constraints is not an easy thing during 1990s in China. The emergence of Dakou culture has encouraged thousands of young people like Qian to hunt diversity on personality and to stick out their differentiation, then to get their self-identification.

A possessed collector

Kai collected almost 2000 Dakou CDs (see figure 11) when he was still a college student. For these CDs, he spent every penny of his pocket money and from time to time, had to be a part-time pedlar to support this spending. By the time he got a job, he already expended nearly 50,000 RMB on his collection, that’s quite a lot among all the enthusiasts I know. When I asked Kai if I could interview him for my thesis, he suggested me to consider him as a collector more than a simple enthusiast. *“My friend described me as a junkie; I have an obsession on continuously purchasing and collecting Dakou CDs”* (Ren 2014). During our interview, Kai repeatedly emphasized the collection and communication value besides the music itself. *“For me, Dakou CDs are the same thing as cultural heritage or treasure. It is also nonrenewable”* (Ibid.).

Kai’s music addiction started from the Japanese music. Then one day a friend showed him a store in a “small alley”. There have thousands Dakou CDs, and not only Japanese

music. In that day, the store boss gave him two CDs for free, from a band called Tonic. Their “fantastic” music makes Kai deeply fascinate on Dakou since then.

The reason he treats Dakou CDs as a habit of collection is because “most of these CDs are already stopped releasing anymore” (Ibid.). For one album, there are usually several different versions targeting to different countries. There is Japanese version, UK version, Dutch version..., and they all have their own feature. For Kai, collecting Dakou CD is a way to communicate and to engage in dialogue with friends: *“Sometimes even I already have one version, but I know it is worth listening, so I will buy an extra one, I can give friends as a gift or to change with someone for another version. (...) In our circle, there are two phrases, ‘gathering’ and ‘switching’¹⁰, meaning to collect different versions of one album and to exchange with other people in this circle. (...) This is already beyond the money and price; it’s like stamps collection and antique stuff, and it’s like my assessment”* (Ibid.).



Figure 11 part of Kai's Dakou CD collection

Referring to his other “business” in college to support the cost on Dakou CDs, Kai laughed. And he calls it as “a dealing to support addiction”. *“I spent roughly 2000 RMB*

¹⁰ In original Chinese: 收盘, 换盘

on collecting CDs per month back to that time, (...) although my parents support this habit, it's still not enough. (...) I earned money from additional business, and then I invested all of it on Dakou CDs. The only thing I did every day [in the college] is to ride on my bike and lingered in different CD stores". Kai also describes collecting CD as a manner of luck, since you will never know in which store you can find a "top one"¹¹. For discovering them, you have to persist in doing the same thing day after day, year after year. And this is not a thing that "everyone can insist doing" (Ibid.).

For now, the situation is kind of different. He lives abroad and has abundant resources. Besides, he already has a job, if he really wants to buy, he "will buy a genuine one" (Ibid.). Nevertheless the habit to listen to alternative music and to support lesser-popular bands never changed. Kai evaluates Dakou as a good thing for himself.

"It's cheap, and it satisfied pursue on music and cultures for music lovers. It had a change of my habit, my way of thinking, and my circle of friends, I contacted the Western music and cultures much earlier than other people. (...) Listening to the music is a thing you need to pour your heart into it. The rhythm taps your minds; you got a responsive chord from it. And the music edifies your sentiment; it makes you see the world and life in different perspectives. Another good thing is, compared with my peers, I learned to raise myself instead of depending on parents; I got techniques to manage and to plan my own life. If it is not Dakou CDs, I would never experience a life which I devoted my entire energy and time on it. And since then, I strive to be a person for perfection."

Till now, Kai is still very proud about his abundant collection. I have so many friends, who are in love with Dakou, and I am also one of them, but his ardent passion still surprised me very much. Unquestionably, he is a dedicated collector of Dakou CDs, but this kind of determined and down-to-earth attitude is also the way he treats his life henceforce. The spirit he got from Dakou is also the motto he insists in his life: "You

¹¹ In original Chinese: 尖货

have to start doing something now, or it will never be done, and as long as you decided to make something happen, the whole world will come to help you” (Ibid.).

The human development will not happen unless the individuals come to think, feel and act in ways that genuinely accommodate their needs and aspirations (UNDP 2004). Just like Angelina, Qian and Kai, the Dakou culture gives its audience an opportunity to independently think and choose a life path that they desire and feel correct. Dakou culture facilitates their development by cultivating the ability to freely choose the lifestyles and to construct their distinct personalities during the growth process.

The formation of Chinese Dakou phenomenon is a process, which the Dakou generation uses their newly gained capability on independent thinking and self-determining judgment to break down the intrinsic one-sided value system. And then, to generate a diverse one, which incorporates more free will and creativity. Society is both the ever-present condition and the continually reproduced outcome of human agency (Bhaskar 1998; Ratner 2010). When free will; action; creativity; originality embodied with Chinese youth, they have been activated as unrestricted agent, and gradually formed an unprecedented culture which approved only by their shared characteristics (UNDP 2013). However, nothing in this newly constructed culture has connections with the conventional one, which is strongly narrowing individuals’ choices and independent autonomy. Accordingly, their future life choices and attitude are largely dependent on this newly shaped culture. And through this way, they accomplished the reformation process on the Dakou culture, which can be seen as particularly owned by the Dakou generation who has actively involved into this procedure.

During the communication and interaction with the Dakou phenomenon; Angelina, Qian and Kai are consciously built up their new understanding towards their own identities as well as the culture. To build and manage the identity and culture is the bedrock principle of human development (UNDP 2004). For human development, the cultural identities are equated with health and education, which also need to be recognized and accommodated by the state (Ibid.). And the individuals must be free to express these

identities without being discriminated against in other aspects of their lives (Blunt 1995; UNDP 2004). Briefly, offering cultural diversity by the authority is an important aspect to facilitate the human development, and thus worthy of more attention as well as action.

From the ecological system perspective, the Dakou culture is situated in the macrosystem among the entire human development system. Its impacts towards individuals cannot be direct, but have to be established through the interaction with lower-order layers (Bronfenbrenner 2009). Angelina, Qian and Kai are the individuals in the system center to be influenced by the Dakou phenomenon; and meanwhile, they are also the medium in the micro-, meso- and exo- system involved expanding the impacts of the Dakou phenomenon. The spirit of Dakou culture satisfied the demand of Chinese youth to be liberated, distinctive and independent. These three Dakou enthusiasts are representatives of these Chinese youth, precisely because of the multiple roles they play in the ecological system, this phenomenon can produce the popularity and widespread among the entire Dakou generation.

4.3. Is the Dakou phenomenon sustainable? If not, what could be the limitations affecting its future?

“The systems aspect of sustainable development implies concern about a total system composed of the many natural and human subsystems, while the long-term aspect of sustainable development implies concern even about the future of these systems.”

Hartmut Bossel, 1999

The formation of Dakou phenomenon is built on a chain, which has several factors and actors. Therefore, stability of it is depending on every aspect on this chain. Any change happened on this link will ultimately cause a corresponding impact on the Dakou phenomenon. In the relation secures the existence of Dakou phenomenon, there are four factors included, which could correspondingly reflect the four dimensions of sustainable development (see Figure 12).

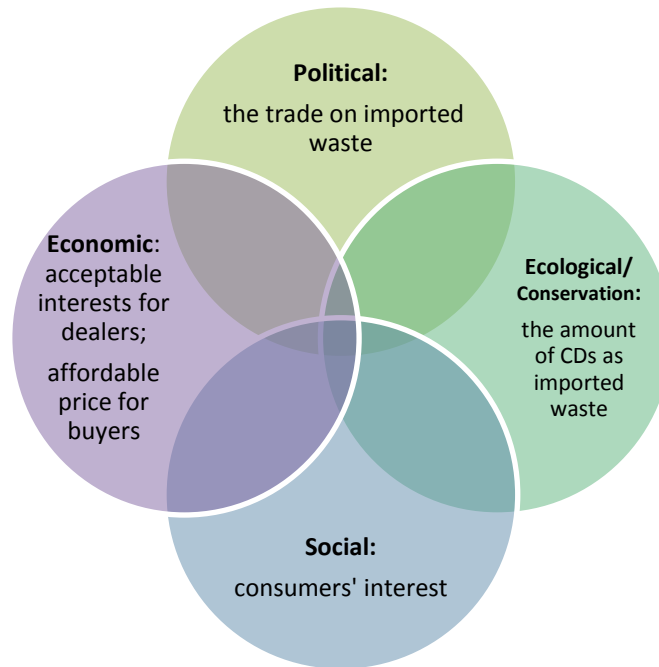


Figure 12 the relation secures the existence of Dakou phenomenon

It is worth noting, the ecological dimension here refers to the conservation, namely all resources and life support system (UNESCO 2010). The implications for infrastructure and social and cultural changes all drive this chain (Bossel 1999). However, in recent years, there are already several existing instability factors revealed on this chain.

Firstly, Chinese government has been controlling the total amount of imported waste due to the increasing environmental problem and public censure (Anonymous 2013). An operation targeting on decreasing the imported waste named the *GREEN FENCE* has been launched since 2013 (Customs-info 2009). Whether the large quantities of CD will be imported to China as plastic waste, is still unknown yet. At the same time, Dakou business is already “in severe decline” (Qu 2014). Due to increasingly stringent regulation on media market and the new policy regarding the imported waste, the maintenance on Dakou business for the dealers is more and more difficult. All street stores have been converted to underground and online sales. The number of Dakou dealers has been reduced as well. Since this business has to be underground and is risky of being arrested, many dealers turn to other legitimate business after “accumulating

the preliminary fortune” (Li 2013). Lastly, the main group of consumers is in change as well. The Dakou generation is growing into their middle age; the passion on Dakou CD has been gradually replaced by “other attentions in life” (Li 2013). The popularity of Dakou culture among the consumers cannot be compared with 1990s or around the beginning of the millennium.

As systems change and develop in a changing environment, specific indicators may lose their relevance and may have to be replaced by others that are more relevant under current conditions (Bossel 1999). The principal factors which used to ensure the existence of Dakou phenomenon have now begun to restrict each other. From the macro perspective, the demand-supply relationship between imported waste and Chinese need on raw materials has slightly changed. Meanwhile, the micro demand-supply relationship between consumers and dealers is also in the transformation. This set obstacles for Dakou phenomenon’s future progress, and also indicates that it is impossible to become a permanent existence.

5. Discussion

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.”

—Mahatma Gandhi

If Dakou phenomenon is not a sustainable existence, what could be the countermeasure for Chinese people to contact other cultures? Or in other words, could Chinese contact the multicultures in a government support means instead of utilizing the piracy or illegal approaches?

There is no doubt that relying on the illegal spread to obtain knowledge of different cultures is an abnormal way, such as the Dakou CDs, or the pirated DVDs. Neither of them can be seen as a permanent solution referring to cultural supply. The actual

change must be taken from the most fundamental development policy. Cultural policies should be included into the framework of social development as an important end of public policies, thus fostering cultural liberty should be a core concern of Chinese government (UNDP 2004). Chinese government should progressively relax control on media market and courageously introduce more cultural products from other countries. The degree of openness on media market should be as equal as on capital market, the questing on cultural development and the economic growth should be in accord in the same pace.

Interdependent links between environment and development are not simply about conservation and economics, but also include a concern for issues that are important parts of sustainable human development (UNDP 1994). “The expansion of cultural freedoms, not suppression, is the only sustainable option to promote stability, democracy and human development within and across societies” (UNDP 2004, 1). As the World Bank (2013, 158) suggested in its newly published report: *“In this turning point of social development, China is calling for a people-centered development policy which embracing a culture of openness and diversity. China may need to develop a culture that encourages more people to boldly pursue new ideas and to push the frontiers of knowledge across a variety of fields.”*

A complete social development must “first successfully confront the challenge of how to build inclusive, culturally diverse societies” (UNDP 2004, v). Not just because doing so successfully is a precondition for countries to focus properly on other priorities of economic growth, health and education for all citizens. But because allowing people full cultural expression is an important development end in itself. Human development is “first and foremost about allowing people to lead the kind of life they choose—and providing them with the tools and opportunities to make those choices” (Ibid.). The policy-makers who are still blindly seeking high-speed economic growth should realize that insufficient cultural supply may ultimately constrain every aspect regarding to social progress.

This thesis had put Dakou culture into a comprehensive context when discussing Chinese development policy during an evolutionary social transition period. It is necessary to understand its formation from a macro societal perspective. Although public policy does not have a direct effect on human development, it should never be neglected when considering human development, especially in today's diverse world. Some Chinese policy-makers may indulge in sophistry that, cultural diversity equated as cultural incursion, eventually may put the country's unity in danger. However, the relationship between cultural diversity and social stability should never be seen on opposite positions: “[cultural] diversity is not a threat to state unity, not the source of inevitable ‘clashes’, not an obstacle to development. Instead, it is at the core of human development—the ability of people to choose who they are” (Ibid., 1). Accommodating people's growing demands for their inclusion in society, takes more than democracy and equitable growth. It also need multicultural policies that recognize differences, champion diversity and promote cultural freedoms, so that all people can participate in shaping their culture— so that all people can choose to be who they are (Ibid.). Social progress is a comprehensive concept; it should be a co-development process of politics, economy, and culture. Every aspect of development should be to create more possibilities for other areas. Operative social policy should create more diverse opportunities for human development instead of setting obstacles, the central value of human and the importance of sufficient cultural supply should be situated at important location.

6. Conclusion

This research is attempting to consider Dakou phenomenon as a part of social environment to analyze its formation, popularity and sustainability. In order to address this objective, three research questions directed the entire research work:

1. *What have being the structural and individual drivers and actors involved in the Dakou phenomenon?*

2. *How does the Dakou phenomenon influence the relationship between individuals and their built environment?*
3. *Is the Dakou phenomenon sustainable? If not, what could be the limitations affecting its future?*

The construction of the Dakou phenomenon is a mixture. Three factors have contributed into this process, which are the strict cultural constraints on the media market; ineffective management on imported waste and the power of awakening individual agencies. The Chinese government, Customs staff, Dakou dealers and the audience have played as the main actors in this course. However, their aims and agencies are quite different. The closely interrelated chain makes all factors and actors create restrictions on each other. And only when every of them in act, the existence of Dakou phenomenon is realistic.

A generation who was born in late 1970s and 1980s was growing up with the widespread of Dakou phenomenon. They witnessed the popularity of Dakou culture and became the main consumer of Dakou CDs in this process. As a part of social environment of this generation, Dakou phenomenon not only offered them an approach to understand the Western cultures, at the same time, the spirit embodied with the music facilitated their development. During the contact with Dakou culture, the capability to think and choose the lifestyles independently, the attitude to bravely pursue distinctive life paths, the relentless persistence of achievement has been gradually formed among its audience. Evaluating human as an organism within the entire ecosystem, these kinds of abilities are necessary conditions for human development. Dakou phenomenon not only played as a main carrier of the foreign cultures, but also a significant element to facilitate the development of Dakou generation.

The sustainability of the existence of Dakou phenomenon is depending on every factor of its formation chain and the involved actors. However, the changes are already taking place in varying degrees. The Chinese government has adjusted its strategy on the trade

of imported waste since 2013. In the future, there probably will be not enough CD resources revealed into the market. On the other hand, the number both of the dealers and the audience are all in decline. Dakou phenomenon has lost its popularity among the main distributors and the consumers. The Dakou phenomenon is also a dynamic cycle development. These changes happened on different dimensions, will ultimately threaten its sustainable existence.

Though the priority objective for this thesis is to consider Dakou phenomenon as a part of social environment to analyze its development, the findings motivated a deeper discussion on the prediction of the cultural products supply. In essence, Dakou CDs are imported waste; however, they have never been treated as useless or rubbish in China. It has been regarded as a main approach to contact the Western cultures in China since 1980s. Besides, it created meaningful influence to Chinese contemporary music culture, regardless of the form of its existence. Furthermore, Dakou phenomenon brought cognitive development to the Dakou generation, what this generation embraces in worth and faith may challenge the mainstream value system of the Chinese government's propaganda. At the turning point of Chinese social transition period, it is essential for the government to reevaluate the rationality of the key development policies and to make corresponding modifications.

Sufficient cultural products supply need to be taken into practices, their significance and effect cannot be realized until they stand on the solid ground. Compared with the commitment remaining in the policies, this requires the authority to make more down-to-earth initiatives to release the excessive restrictions on cultural industries; furthermore, to promote and encourage a social norm embraces innovation and creativity. The authority should never underrate the importance of effective policy regarding human development. The individual potential can be stimulated through effective public policy; vice versa, nominal strategy will eventually weaken the capacity to advocate an inclusive social development.

The policy *REFORMING AND OPENING-UP* has situated China in the commercialization and globalization, and as a fact, the government is always advertising to bring more inclusiveness into entire Chinese society. However, this kind of inclusiveness has been seen a favor of promoting the economic development. Other aspects of social development have not experienced the same chance. To a large extent, the present governance stayed still on sealing access of knowledge and information on publication, dissemination, and proliferation. However, regarding of China's openness and the level of its development, this kind of regime is not applicable anymore. The authority should be comprehended as soon as possible that, the backwardness on cultural development will eventually threaten the long-term economic development. Only when all the various aspects of social development go hand in hand, could a country achieve the target of sustainable development. In what way people develop themselves is largely depending on what kind of social circumstances are constructed. If a nation is really provoking the social progress, offering sufficient a part of social development is an unavoidable choice. The government should strive as much as possible to create more approaches and possibilities for public to access different cultures.

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Appendix:

Guidelines for interviews

Category	Name	The form of interview
1. Dakou enthusiasts	Angelina Qu	Skype
	Qian Yang	Skype
	Kai Ren	Skype
2. Music Critic	Fang Hao	Email

3. Feature Documentary Director	Kunlu Li	Skype
4. China Customs staff	Anonymous	Email
5. Dakou dealer	Anonymous	Skype (off the record)

Questions:

Category 1: (phone interview)

- 1) Thank you very much for taking the time to accept the interview. The main purpose is to collect data for my thesis. First I need to inform you that I will record our conversation. But the purpose of recording is, I need to sort after the interview, not for other uses.
- 2) Can I mention your name in the article? Or are you willing to appear anonymously?
- 3) The first question might have some offensive, but because I want to understand the main audience of the Dakou phenomenon, so I need to know your age.
- 4) How did you contact with the Dakou phenomenon? Is there some story you can share with me?
- 5) For Angelina Qu: I heard that you deliberately went to Shantou to go to college? Is this true? Can you tell me about this experience?
For Qian Yang: I heard that you sold Dakou CDs years before. When and where did that occur? For how long it lasted? Why you finally quit the business?
For Kai Ren: I heard you also managed some other business to maintain the cost on Dakou CDs before. Is this true? Can you tell me about this experience?
- 6) Are you still in addiction with the Dakou CDs? Is the Dakou culture still weighty in your current life?
- 7) How did Dakou culture influence you from your own perspective?
- 8) How do you evaluate the Dakou phenomenon / the Dakou culture?

Category 2: (Email interview)

- 1) I heard that you've been Shantou once to observe the Dakou business. Do you know that the number of the annual amount of these CDs?

- 2) I mentioned in my thesis that, although the existence of Dakou is marginalized, but it indeed inspired the growth the 70s and 80s generation. This effect is not only in the music, more importantly, they contacted with multicultures. Do you agree with my opinion? How did Dakou culture influence you from your own perspective?
- 3) As a music critic, how do you evaluate the current Chinese cultural policy?
- 4) In your opinion, is the Dakou phenomenon sustainable? Could you give any prediction on this business? What kind of alternatives can the Chinese youth to contact Western cultures?

Category 3: (phone interview)

- 1) Could you tell me why you choose Dakou as your documentary subject?
- 2) Are you also a Dakou enthusiast?
- 3) According to your contacts with your interviewees, does Dakou influence their lives?

Category 4: (email interview)

- 1) How did these Dakou CDs import to China? Whether they use a separate commodity during imports?
- 2) Could you estimate the annual amount of the Dakou CDs which flow into the market?
- 3) Who made this specific behavior of punching the cut? I heard different sayings from different resources.