

Interactive Conference #1 Macau Experience - Exploring Successful Practices of Integration of Civilizations

Framing civilizations for a common future

In 1513, about a hundred years after Portugal began its historic period of the discovery and implementation of new sea routes, the Portuguese explorer Jorge Alvares and his crew arrived near the coast at the mouth of the River of Pearls in Guangdong Province, at the southern part of the vast Chinese mainland, during the period in which the powerful Ming dynasty ruled China¹.

At that time China was, as in most of his honorable millenary history, a great power, with a common civilization and identifiable territory, with a cultural and scientific sophistication and developed political, administrative and economical organization. China was already, as well, a central Nation in Asian geopolitics.

Portugal, a small nation of the westernmost extent of Europe, was, by Chinese standards, a recent state with about four centuries of history.

At the time of the first Portuguese contacts with China in the sixteenth century, China was already a civilization with almost 4000 years of history.

The arrival by sea of a small group of Europeans at the mouth of the Pearl River (Zhu Jiang) was an episode that had no immediate importance to China and that only later would be news in the Imperial court.

The Ming Dynasty had adopted at that period a closing policy of the territory, banning Chinese travels outside and entries of foreigners. It was a period of instability in several borders of the Empire, and also in the southern regions, subject to frequent pirate attacks.

¹ Carneiro, Roberto; Martins, Guilherme d'Oliveira (coord). China and Portugal - five

The trade with the outside world was severely limited, and had to undergo a set of formalities integrated in tribute missions paid to the Emperor.

Portuguese newcomers were unaware of these realities, despite having a growing role in the trade routes of the East Asia region.

From its base settled in Malacca the Portuguese wanted to expand this role, but they didn't know Chinese traditions nor China's central place in the Asian context.

Despite the constraints raised at that period by the Chinese Empire to free movement to ensure its protection and defense, the Chinese society had an interest in the circulation of goods by sea.

Therefore, in the context of the sixteenth century, the establishment of an informal commercial warehouse at the mouth of the River of Pearls managed by Portuguese was a pragmatic way to ensure the flow of opportunities and needs of goods to and from the Southern Chinese territory, and at the same time did not contradict the formal mechanisms of limitation of the movement of people.

This form of informal relationship lasted more than three centuries until the formal recognition of the Portuguese Administration of Macau, which only happened, in a different context, in the late nineteenth century.

The Portuguese presence in East Asia to China began being not relevant. The Portuguese were just another group of foreigners interested in trade with China.

While the Chinese had an interest in having a commercial intermediary, the Portuguese, after initial inauspicious moments, ensured an important role in the fight against piracy, and showed persistency and sharpness in trade. This situation inspired mutual respect, allowing a harmonization of interests that would last over time.

In the early sixteenth century, Macau was only an informal meeting place between civilizations. But China has demonstrated interest in the opening and development of Macau as a territory permeable to economical and cultural exchanges. Over the decades and centuries, Macau has gained importance and recognition, and became one of the most important symbols of successful integration among civilizations in the twenty-first century.

Since the contacts in the early sixteenth century until the date of the full re-integration of Macau in Chinese sovereignty in 1999, the Portuguese were the first Europeans who received the permission to create a regular contact for establishing a commercial space with China and, with China's consent, they were the last Europeans who delivered a self-administered territory in China.

The small Portuguese nation founded in the twelfth century changed its place in the world's historical process with the development of new techniques and strategies leading to the discovery of new sea routes from the fifteenth century on.

Portugal has contributed decisively to the globalization which started to develop in the fifteenth century with its navigation initiatives and maritime trade. The results are visible in political, economic, cultural, scientific and religious achievements whose systemic effects are still being felt today all around the world.

Macau, in the context of the history of maritime routes that linked China and Portugal, has never been a Portuguese colony but a Chinese territory with Portuguese Administration, authorized by China.

Historically, its existence must be seen as an agreement of mutual interest and without any imposition. These are the best agreements, these are the best examples of meetings of communities.

Meanwhile, during the fertile period for the Portuguese history in the world that were the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Portugal has made some decisive contributions to globalization:

The nautical quadrant, the caravel and its firepower, the Latin sail, new maps, organizing a network of maritime fortresses covering the African coast, India and until the South China Sea, as well as a regular communication between them², promoting a first real network of global trade and a number of regional networks of trade, the application of mathematics, geometry and astronomy to new forms of navigation and cartographic design, globalization of food products through its circulation between continents... These are some of the elements that made a small state a historic power known among nations.

Among the results that endure until today, the Portuguese language is one of the most important: it is the most spoken language in the southern hemisphere.

Another achievement is the set of states and territories around the world resulting from the Portuguese presence or showing signs of the Portuguese presence in the last six centuries. States like Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Cape Vert, Guiné-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe and East Timor. Territories like Goa, Malacca, Java, Japanese territories. And territories of all continents were reached at that time by Portuguese in an extraordinary journey of contact with the unknown.

Since the establishment in 1979 of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Portuguese Republic until today, the strengthening of the relations between the two countries has continued to grow.

The way in which the transfer of Macau's Administration to China occurred, the subsequent results of major Chinese investment in Portugal and Portuguese-speaking countries nowadays, or the number of Portuguese

² Rodrigues, Jorge Nascimento; Devezas, Tessaleno. *Portugal, the pioneer of globalization*. Edition CentroAtlântico 2007.

living in Macau represent clear evidence of the partnership between both countries.

The Chinese community in Portugal is an important and respected community, more and more Chinese visit Portugal on holiday or on business. Portuguese people also increasingly visit China.

Multiple activities in the cultural area of the Macau Special Administrative Region are anchors for the development of joint projects, namely in the area of universities, business creation promoting creative industries, as well as the exchange in the area of cultural tourism, cultural heritage, museums, edition, audiovisual, digital creation and arts.

There is a wide range of possibilities for collaboration in the cultural field. With an attitude of mutual respect, deepening cultural relations is not only desirable but can contribute to the economical and social development of our countries and partners worldwide.

Macau is nowadays a practical example of the integration of civilizations. Many nationalities, many cultures, many ways of living meet and intersect here.

The integration between civilizations is a step of maturity that results from the contacts between different cultures. The meeting of cultures in a given territory can result in:

- Segregation, meaning a coexistence without real contact and sometimes with suspicion or mutual hostility - some forms of multiculturalism, on the cover of tolerance between cultures, are no more than forms of segregation;
- Subordination, namely the devaluation of one in the relation of the other in circumstances of cultural contact.
- Integration, or assimilation, which results without antagonism in enrichment in cultural contact without segregation or subordination.

Social, cultural and political aspects rather than economic ones, are the issues I wish to enhance in my communication.

Today the economic success of Macau is an evidence. And it is clear that its economic success owes much to the way time and people worked and realized there a development model. And it is clear too that the dynamics of cultural encounter here favoured economic development.

But more than cultural economy, in this communication what interests me is to talk about cultural policy as an organizing element of a new perspective.

We live in a complex world and somehow a new world.

With its technological and scientific revolutions, the twenty-first century raises unexpected challenges.

In 1970 it would been hardly possible to outline scenarios for everything that happened afterwards. The last 45 years have been years of great change:

- new technologies allowed the generalization of the Internet and mobile communications and all associated systems changed the way of doing politics, the models of economical organization, communication, individual and collective behaviour (although part of the world population has no access to these new devices);
- new scientific revolutions create opportunities and new challenges, from artificial intelligence to the understanding of the universe; changing concepts of war and peace as wells as changes in the understanding of body and mind;
- deregulation of financial markets since the early 80s and the way they have become predatory in relation to the economy and world politics in the last thirty years has created new challenges for the organization of power all over the world;
- increase of the world population and life average expectation, of the aging population, correlated with the shortage of raw materials, water and food

pose challenges that remain unanswered, but require an amendment of organizational models at worldwide level;

- the possible entry of the Earth into a new geological age that some have defined as Anthropocene, that is, the age at which global climate changes are provoked by mankind, and poses a challenge whose dimension is only resolvable by the concerted interests at global level;
- the development and affirmation of religious and political radicalisms in many parts of the world, on every continent, has created new challenges for cooperation between states and nations.

Faced with such a massive set of rapid changes and questions, I believe that the answers that we need to find meet in culture a key element.

Human societies can be looked at from different perspectives, which are namely political, economical, social, cultural or religious.

None of these perspectives is 'pure', i.e. completely protected from crossed points of view.

But all these perspectives are cultural.

All political, economical, social and religious looks have a common matrix: they were built from representations made by individuals and communities.

All representations are forms of culture, they are contributions of human communities to the construction of meanings.

And all representations correspond to value systems.

Human communities, throughout history, have often fought each other for different forms of supremacy.

The demand for supremacy of values in systems of representation is one of the most important concerns of any organized power.

All power systems know that in a given community, it is in the organization and identity on common values that builds cohesion.

Precisely for this reason, in the twenty-first century, culture is the key element in the organization of contemporary societies, more than technology or science.

In many ways, the economic cycles of the past decades placed economy at the center of our attention.

In many ways, recent scientific and technological revolutions changed both personal and social behaviours and perspectives.

The systems of values which allow the patterns of identity and cohesion have encountered difficulties to track and organize personal and social dynamics in the context of rapid changes in the recent decades.

But the dialogue between individuals and communities is not possible without a sense of identity.

If I do not know who I am and what are my values, I have no capacity to look and distinguish between my space and the space of others. Only the capability of distinction gives us a framework for dialogue.

There is no possibility to get knowledge of others and establishing dialogues without having confidence in our own identity. And without the possibility of dialogue it is not possible to build mutual respect, which is essential for the meeting of people and nations and the construction of common projects.

The awareness of the importance of these elements is essential in the organization of contemporary challenges.

And the existence of these elements depends more on the construction of cultural identities than on political or economic constraints. We all know how

political power can give us the tools for domination or economical power the tools for corruption.

But only culture in its comprehensive capability can give us the tools for a deep, solid and remaining understanding of ourselves and the others.

Even if technologies and sciences have changed dramatically our ways of looking at the world, they are instrumental. The economy itself is instrumental.

Culture is the key behind our way of thinking, our way of feeling, it is our strength and weakness. For this reason we need to care for culture and raise it in every man, woman or children from the beginning and during all their lives. Family education and school education are fundamental to reach those objectives.

We must be able nowadays to refocus on people, on the meaning of all the areas of human activities.

We need new forms of humanism; they imply the will to see beyond immediate problems, given the complexity of contemporary challenges.

This is why this World Cultural Forum is important.
That is why it is important that it happens in Macau.

Chinese and Portuguese managed to build in Macau a meeting place for civilizations, yet not without difficulties or problems.

All meetings involve difficulties and problems, but in every encounter what matters is the real will to overcome the difficulties in favour of a greater good.

Macau is a living proof of achievement of the ancient wisdom and contemporary determination of China in relation with Western perspectives.

A gathering of people, languages, administrative systems, legal models of economic organization, concepts and cultural practices.

This cultural meeting created a new reality of integration of civilizations. Macanese people, for instance, are living examples.

It is a reality that somehow Macau transcends the starting points, both on the Chinese as on the Portuguese side.

The materialization in Macau of the meeting of different perspectives and the capacity of various stakeholders in finding a common way is the proof of an openness that should be taken into account.

The world's challenges are more complex than Macau's established system and its qualities, of course.

But the world can not ignore the possibilities of values, integration and a sense of community building that is a reality in Macau.

In 2016, 1% of the world population holds a wealth equivalent to the one of the remaining 99%. The 62 largest fortunes in the world hold the equivalent of wealth of 50% of the poorest of the world's population³.

I think we all realize that the last decades models of political and economic organization have failed in the fair distribution of prosperity.

Again, the cultural view of the world is important. A view that allows looking beyond the issues of political and economic power. A view that speaks of our plural cultural heritage and our creative ability as individuals and as communities.

A view that shows the wonderful achievements that throughout history, the diversity of cultural expressions, men and women all over the world have brought to the human being. From North America to South Africa, Eastern

³ Oxfam data, 2016.

Asia to Western Europe, North America to South Asia, from Eastern Europe to Oceania, the Middle East to South Africa.

The better we know each other, the easier it is to accept and promote fairer processes of redistribution of wealth and prosperity.

We humans do not exist beyond culture. Culture shapes the way we think, we feel, we look at ourselves and others. Shapes the way others look at us and how we represent ourselves through the eyes of others.

The culture, diversity and plurality which corresponds to the contemporary world, has both the power to create bridges and to raise walls.

We can not deny that culture has often been used as a mere instrument of domination under the cover of the interest of the people, all over the world.

Culture is therefore both an opportunity of pluralism, personal and social growth and a tool that can serve the manipulation of consciences and behaviour.

Every moment depends on how we place ourselves in relation to it, the result we can get.

The last decades were marked by the paradigm of economic growth. Today, we know that natural resources are limited and perishable, and that there are limits to the containment of costs of goods and services, there are limits to the functioning of markets, there are limits to financial speculation.

Today, it is important to replace the paradigm of economic growth, which has guided us for the last decades, by the paradigm of human development.

This proposal here does not intend to promote the withdrawal and positive determination for economic growth.

But it means giving first priority to the centrality of man⁴ in relation to all decisions. We have to enter a renewed perspective: the human development paradigm instead the economic growth paradigm.

I consider this way of prioritizing the core options that should be taken for promoting the quality of life of people as adequate to the challenges of the contemporary world.

Given the multitude of challenges we all face, challenges that we face simultaneously, if we don't have a wire that is acceptable for all or at least for the majority of states, it will be difficult to find a balance to facilitate progress.

In a world where the role of the states remains crucial and is not replaceable by business corporations or diffuse financial interests, or international organizations, the wire of culture is a wire which can create networks, generate communication and meetings.

But coming back to Macau, as the theme of this panel and an example in this forum: Macau is a society where the integration of civilizations works.

It takes new looks to ensure the main objectives that guide us for a long time in human development. Harmony, Peace and Happiness are essential elements for the construction of individuals and societies as a whole.

Culture is part of the path to achieve these elements.

Here in Macau, bridges were created in the last five centuries. Bridges are not always easy to build – they require dedicated workers, patience and goodwill. Sometimes construction is time consuming and requires new beginnings.

⁴ Xavier, Jorge Barreto. *The culture in everyday life*. Porto Editora, 2016.

There are moments of discouragement and difficulty. But all this is part of the construction process.

Today, when we look at the results, we know that here the bridge builders were right in their persistence and determination.

This example of understanding and integration of civilizations will inspire our lives, where the challenge of complexity should not make us blind or disoriented, on the contrary, they should stimulate us to learn from the good examples that can help us to be and to do better.

Thank you very much.

Jorge Barreto Xavier