

The Four-Level Analysis Approach: A New Methodology in Enterprise Anthropology

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The international recognition of enterprise anthropology (EA) as a sub-discipline of anthropology in 2009 launched the fourth anthropological evolution, in which Chinese anthropologists and ethnologists played a leading role in transforming the long-term tradition of following the Westernized research paradigm in anthropological research and studies. Among the important contributions of Chinese anthropologists is the proposal of the Four-Level Analysis Approach, a new methodology to study enterprises through the multiple layers of analysis from the macro, meso, and micro perspectives. This paper is intended to elaborate the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the methodology, multi-level analysis of enterprises and its applications in research and studies in Chinese enterprises. The future development of this methodology is also discussed in the article.

Keywords: enterprise anthropology, the Four-Level Analysis Approach, methodology, time-honored brand enterprises

INTRODUCTION

In 2009, under the initiative of Chinese anthropologists and ethnologists, enterprise anthropology (EA) became an internationally recognized sub-discipline of anthropology (Zhang 2016a, 2016b, 2017a). This disciplinary recognition consequently led to the fourth anthropological evolution that witnessed the formation of a new research paradigm, the extended and in-depth scholarships in research area, the unification of research subject naming systems, and the gaining international impact of research outcomes and academic activities (Zhang 2017a). Along with these considerable achievements in EA are Chinese anthropologist strenuous efforts to break through the long tradition of following the westernized paradigm in conducting research and studies in anthropology (Zhang 2016a, 2016b, 2017b). A noticeable breakthrough by Chinese anthropologist researchers is the proposal of the Four-Level Analysis Approach (the Approach), a methodology proposed by Zhang Jijiao in 2016. In this paper, we aim to address three questions revolving around this theoretical and methodological scholarship: (1) What is the Approach? (2) How did Chinese anthropologists and researchers employ this methodology in the EA research and studies? (3) What is the future development of this methodology?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

The Theory of Social Structural Transformation

The theory of social structural transformation was introduced in 1992 by Li Peilin, a Chinese leading sociologist. In this theory, Li (1992, 1994, 1995) postulates “*three hands*” in shaping and promoting Chinese resource allocation and economic development since China’s open-door policy in the 1980s. Among these *three hands*, government intervention and market mechanism are the two dynamisms which he respectively describes as *a visible hand* and *an invisible hand*; the *third hand*, another invisible one, is Chinese social structural transformation. This *invisible third hand*, according to Li (1994, 1995), acts as another paramount mechanism in allocating social resources - it not only profoundly affects the directions of Chinese economic reform and industrial restructuring, but also strongly promotes the entire societal development. In other words, this *third hand*, i.e., social structural transformation, like government intervention and market mechanism, plays a pivotal role in Chinese social resource allocation and economic development. This theory of social structural transformation has been making great impacts on social sciences studies in Chinese academics and beyond (Zhang 2011; Zhang 2016b).

Big Society and Small Society

Based on the theory of social structural transformation, Zhang (2016a) introduces two concepts, namely, *big society* and *small society*, both of which constitute social structural transformation and act as invisible hands in the social development. *Big society* exists in the entire human society and refers to social structural transformation in a broad sense; it includes government intervention, market mechanism, society, and their relationships and interaction. As *an invisible big hand*, it exists due to the blurred boundaries between the government, market, and society in China, as the country is still in its process of industrialization, marketization, and urbanization. *Small society* is defined as social structural transformation in a narrow sense; it includes social structural factors except government intervention and market mechanism. A pertinent example of a *small society* is the ancient business street where time-honoured brand enterprises (THBEs) are located in some Chinese cities and regions. In such *small societies*, the enterprises establish and maintain stable, long-term, and reciprocal relations with the entities concerned; such complicated relations, in turn, affect the local resource allocation and economic development.

Umbrella Society

Besides *big society* and *small society*, Zhang (2014a, 2017a) proposes the concept of *umbrella society*. This concept sits in the Chinese political system, whose development lags far behind China’s remarkable economic progress, particularly in its appointing system for important positions in state-owned enterprises (SOEs). In other words, the appointment of leadership positions in these business organizations remains the same as in the planned economy before the economic reform. For instance, managers of SOEs were appointed by the central government and the local SOEs by the local governments. The personnel appointing system helps governments to intervene in the business management while they provide enterprises with funds and other supports. In such an institutional system, the central and local governments, along with the SOEs, establish umbrella societies featured by umbrella relations like that of patrons and clients (Zhang 2014b, 2017a).

Beehive Society

To comprehensively analyze the social structural transformation in Chinese economy, Zhang (2015e, 2018) also posits *beehive society*, the twin concept of *umbrella society* which highlights governments’ predominance in resource allocation and economic development. The *beehive society* examines roles that the working class plays in Chinese social and economic transformation. In this concept, Zhang (2015e, 2018) proposes that people from all walks of life comprise the beehive society, in which the individual people are like the “bees”. The impact of these “bees” is particularly salient during the transitional period when China was transforming from planned economy to market economy, with the power and privilege

shifting from administrators and managers to the working class and the individuals. Such social transformation and power-shifting considerably increase common people's opportunities in making profits and allocating social resources, thus resulting in their active engagement in establishing diverse *beehive societies* (Zhang 2015e, 2018). China witnessed an increasing number of self-employed people playing different roles, such as vendors, private owners, professional managers, and freelancers. Obviously, in Chinese economic development, these people are building up their own networks – beehives societies through their personal and family efforts in the social structural transformation.

In the studies and research of enterprises, the concept of *beehive society* is employed to explore the structures and functions of private enterprises from the management perspective. To that end, Zhang (2015e, 2018) postulates three fundamental types of *beehive societies* that are centered in different types of networking in Chinese society: (1) family-centered mutual benefit network; (2) value chain-centered win-win cooperation network; and (3) ethnic group-centered mutual benefit and win-win network.

THE FORMULATION AND APPLICATION OF THE APPROACH

The Approach, according to Zhang (2016a), is a methodology using anthropological epistemology to research enterprises through the four levels that include multiple layers of analysis from the macro, meso, and micro perspectives. Specifically, the first level in the Approach is macro analysis; the second and third levels are meso analysis and the fourth micro analysis.

Formulation of the Approach

The Approach was developed by Chinese anthropologists and ethnologists in the research of THBEs from 2010 to 2016 (Zhang 2015a, 2015b). It is an important contribution to the westernized research paradigm in anthropology (Zhang 2016a). As mentioned earlier, EA was founded in 2009. This emerging branch of anthropology required some target topics to provide a research base for its theoretical development (Zhang 2016a; Li and Zhang 2016). THBEs eventually became a good selection for the empirical studies to develop the theories in EA. Two reasons explain why Chinese anthropologists chose THBEs as their research target. One reason is related to THBEs' important role in Chinese economic development. In China, there is a multitude of THBEs in various industries. According to the official statistics released in 2018, there are 1,128 national THBEs with a history of more than 140 years.¹ Besides these THBEs, there are a much larger number of regional THBEs in the provinces and municipalities. Although having a shorter history than national THBEs, local THBEs also play a vital part in the national economy. The other reason to choose THBEs as the focal area of research is about the highlight of national cultures in EA research. Many Chinese THBEs not only witness the ancient history of the country but also become business entities in sustaining the national culture (Wu 2016). For instance, Quanjude, a state-owned THBE having a history of more than 150 years, reserves some unique recipes for Chinese cuisines. Their chain restaurants are world renowned for their singular Beijing Roast Duck that is widely recognized as one of China's Four National Dishes.

Starting from the end of 2010, a series of research projects were conducted in Chinese THBEs at national and provincial levels (Zhang 2015c, 2015d, 2016a; Li and Zhang 2016), and eventually formulated the Approach in 2016 (Zhang 2016a). This methodological formulation shows a research progression with growing complexity from doing single case studies in THBEs to developing an abstract and in-depth analytical framework aiming to research enterprises at the four levels from the micro, meso, and macro perspectives. To present the four-level analysis in the Approach, we will explain how the concepts and methods are employed in analyzing enterprises at the different levels. It is noteworthy that the enterprises illustrated in the methodological application not only include THBEs but also SOEs and private companies, as they are all important forms of business entities in the Chinese economy.

The Approach and Its Applications

Level 1: Macro Perspective, Studying Enterprises by the Concepts of Big Society and Umbrella Society

To analyze enterprises from the macro perspective, Zhang (2016a) proposes to adopt the concept of *big society* in the research related to enterprise development and prospect. Particularly, this concept is helpful to understand *umbrella relations* between the governments and SOEs in China. In such relations, the governments not only take control of the enterprises but also provide them protection and supports; figuratively, the governments and enterprises form *umbrella societies*. Zhang (2016a) argues two main reasons for this phenomenon in China: (1) The governments largely depend on these business organizations to allocate resources and promote economic development in the country; (2) SOEs are the ruling foundation of the Chinese Communist Party (Shui and Kong 2015). The *big society* in China is composed of complicated relations among such stakeholders as governments, enterprises, the market, and the *small society*. To put it differently, enterprises are not merely business entities in the market. Their relations with the governments are not simply government-business ones, but *umbrella relations* – a term indicating their close connections with governments, the market, and society. In that sense, their resource allocation is not completely oriented by the market, but tremendously depends on the complex political, economic, social and cultural relations in the *big society*. It is this concept claimed by Zhang (2016a) that enables anthropologists to see the nature, characteristics, and operational system of the enterprises in China. Meanwhile, he highlights that this level of analysis is made from the macro perspective pertaining to the political, economic, and social attributes of enterprises, and researchers are obligated to have multi-disciplinary knowledge and broad views in conducting research and studies on EA (Zhang 2016a).

Applying the methodology to the research at this macro level, Zhang and his research team incorporate the concepts of *big society* and *umbrella society* into their analysis of enterprises. This could be seen in their research projects in several Chinese SOEs (Zhang 2014a, 2017b; Huang and Chen 2017), including Xinglong Overseas Chinese Farm (Xinglong) which was a typical state-owned enterprise in Hainan province, established by the local governments in 1951. Xinglong was an agricultural SOE having dual roles in its establishment, that is, a business company for profit making and a political organization for refugee settlement. In the last thirty years, Xinglong has been thriving from a planned economy with a single economic structure in agriculture to an enterprise owning several companies and engaging in diversified industries, including agriculture, industry, commerce, and tourism. Analyzing Xinglong's structural transformation and economic development, Zhang (2014a, 2017b) points out that the relations between the local governments and the SOE are not simply the superior-subordinate relations, but patron-client-like *umbrella relations*. These reciprocal relations among local governments, Xinglong, and its affiliations are fostered by exercising four levers in running its business. The first lever is signing contracts with affiliated companies; in these contracts, relationships, responsibilities, and obligations are specified and regulated. According to the contracts, the local governments and Xinglong have the final decisions in business investment, major operations, and human resources, while the affiliations, driven by a bonus system, are responsible for the daily management of the business organizations. Resource allocation, such as land distribution, is the second lever Xinglong operates on its companies. For example, in 1993, to promote the tourist development in the area, Xinglong distributed 10-square-kilometer wide land received from the provincial government to about 60 individual business entities, such as hotels, restaurants, and holiday villages. The third lever Xinglong makes on its business affiliations is providing administrative services, such as assisting them to obtain business licenses, product certifications, and tax abatement. The last lever is making investment and giving financial grants, the most impactful means to intervene in the enterprise's structural transformation and economic development. In a nutshell, in such a *big society*, the local government, Xinglong, and its affiliations comprise complex *umbrella relations* directed by the political, economic, social interests of the stakeholders of the enterprise.

Level 2: Meso Perspective, Analyzing the Enterprise by the Concepts of Small Society and Beehive Society

To make second-level analysis from the meso perspective, *small society* is a central concept employed in the methodology. *Small society*, as previously mentioned, includes social structural factors except the government intervention and market mechanism (Zhang 2016a). One major way to integrate

this concept into the EA research is to analyze relationships between *small society* and the development of enterprises. Like the research at macro level, as Zhang (2016a) reminds, the analysis at this level is also complex and difficult, because the government, market, and society are not distinctly separated from each other in China. Hence, it requires researchers to have extensive knowledge and expertise to identify the economic and social attributes of enterprises. Specifically, when researchers use the methodology at this level of analysis, THBEs are not studied as independent business entity, but through their relations with the old business streets in the *small society* they are embedded in (Zhang 2016a). To analyze these relations, Li and Zhang (2016) suggest anthropologists adopt both the bottom-up and top-down approaches in the research of THBEs. The former approach refers to researching the enterprise from the anthropologist/lower-position perspective, while the latter means studying the enterprise from the perspectives of city planners and government officials, that is, people at a higher position. Applying both approaches to the studies in THBEs, employing the single popular bottom-up approach, according to Zhang (2016a), is to avoid “failing to see the wood for the trees” (Zhang 2016a, 97). In that sense, using the concept of *small society* entails an inclusive analysis of THBEs’ business development related to their local history and culture, their industry competitiveness and the city planning.

A good case in the meso analysis is Zhang’s (2015c) research on the THBEs along Shanghai Nanjing Pedestrian Street, an ancient shopping area with a history of more than 160 years. In his research, Zhang (2015c) centers on two major questions: (1) Why are THBEs located together along the ancient business street rather than spreading in different places in the city? (2) Why is the agglomeration of THBEs conducive to their development? His research indicates that ancient business streets are indeed the *small societies* by which THBEs sustain and thrive in the competitive market, showcasing the features of networking, localization, regional recognition, and agglomeration effects (Zhang 2015c, 2016a). Specifically, networking happens through formal contracts and informal relationships between enterprises and their counterparts along the street; it not only enhances THBEs’ competitiveness but also increases the commercial edge of the region and the city. In the meantime, being rooted in the local place and agglomerating along the street, THBEs are likely to have a sense of regional recognition and cultural belonging. In this sense, it is important to acknowledge the history and development to foster such reciprocity, competitiveness, sense of cultural and regional identities among THBEs in these *small societies*. Indeed, in a broad sense, the ancient business street is not only representative of the city’s history and culture, but also a competitive asset in city development. Zhang (2016a, 95) suggests that policy makers, and local governments, in the process of new urbanization, industrialization and marketization, should both remove the ancient commercial street and rebuild a new one, and relocate THBEs that are invaluable assets left by our ancestors”.

Besides *small society*, *beehive society* is another important concept used in the methodology at this level of analysis. Illustratively, at this level of analysis, Zhang (2016a) uses this concept to examine the ethnic group-centered mutual benefit network, one type of beehive societies based on minority groups. In his studies of the mass exodus of Mongolian people to the city of Hohhot in the first decade of the 21st century, Zhang (2015e, 2018) employs this notion of *beehive society* to analyze distinctive features embodied in the Mongolian-centered enterprises. One interesting finding is related to the dominant industries most Mongolian immigrant people engage in, the catering and handcraft industries. His researches (Zhang 2015e, 2018) show that the business run by Mongolian people in the cities, no matter whether it is restaurant or an artifact shop, has a strong connection with their relatives and friends from the same minority group. Such a closely connected relationship based on ethnicity indeed creates a beehive society that provides strong supports for the ethnic business development. This beehive society, according to Zhang’s (2018, 14) research, “not only enhances their business competitiveness but also brings unique ethnic culture to the city life”. In other words, the ethnic food service and artifacts they provide in the city promote the urban marketing of Mongolian-featured products, i.e. Mongolian cuisine and handcrafts. Another noteworthy finding is the establishment of Mongolian-centered business area in Hohhot. This business center fosters the development of Mongolian beehive societies, promoting the commercial and social exchanges and interactions between rural and urban places populated by Mongolian people. As a result, the beehive societies consisting of the Mongolian migrants and ethnic

entrepreneurs are shaping a new type of economic culture in the city that embraces the ethnic culture originating from the pastoral area, and also promoting the learning of urban culture in the remote areas in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and other domestic and overseas regions. As Zhang (2018, 15) claims, “These ethnic enterprises, through the beehive society they create and thrive in, become a ‘connection’ between cities and villages, modern and tradition, industrial and nomad life”.

Level 3: Meso Perspective, Exploring the Sustainability and Success of Enterprises

This level analysis in enterprises is also from a meso perspective, but it has a different focus on the sustainability and success of business entities. More specifically, research and studies center on enterprises’ core competitiveness and other issues related to business competitive factors, such as core capacity, systemic operation, developmental strategies, and the core business optimization (Zhang 2016a). Studies pertaining to enterprise competitiveness and advantages are indeed associated with enterprises’ sustainable development that has become a remarkable feature in a considerable number of Chinese THBEs which have lasted for several generations.

Zhang (2016a) argues that THBEs’ longevity and success in modern times are closely linked with their core competitiveness in developing information technology. Given the intensified globalization and widespread use of technology in Chinese enterprises, Zhang and his research team conducted a series of research in the informational development in THBEs across 13 provinces in China from 2011 to 2015. Their findings reveal four stages of developing information technology in these THBEs: (1) simple data process, (2) localizing information technology, (3) integrating internal information, and (4) integrating both internal and external information (Zhang 2016a). Their research indicates that 51.1% THBEs in China remain at the second stage of their informational development, i.e. localizing information technology, which makes them far from being competitive in the globalized market. Among the remaining approximately 49% THBEs, some reach the third level in developing their information technology. A good example is Shengxifu, a time-honoured hat manufacturer having a history of more than 100 years (Zhang 2016a). At the third stage of information technology, this enterprise has been running through the integration of internal information and resources, although it has not been managed through the enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, a more advanced management system.

Obviously, reaching the highest stage of information technology, that is, integrating both internal and external information, means the optimum competitiveness in the industry. Daoxiaocun, a food manufacturer established in 1895 is a good example. Since 2003, the enterprise has been operating in the ERP system that enables its real-time data acquisition and the integration of food production, inventory, and large-scale sales network. This consequently enhances the enterprise comprehensive management and the core competitiveness in the market. Another example is shown in the analysis of the sustainable and successful development of Zhang Yiyuan Tea House, a THBE of more than 210 years. Analyzing the enterprise’ sustainability and success in tea business, researchers (Zhang and Liu 2015) further reveal the crucial role information technology plays in the quality control when the enterprise does business with different parties in the value chain in its industry, including tea suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, and retailers. Overall, to maintain the high quality of tea, the enterprise integrates internal and external information to the extent that ensures efficient operation and effective management at the different stages of production and sale. Suffice it to say, the information technology in an enterprise determines whether the enterprise could compete successfully in the national and international market. Without an advanced technology system, enterprises will be difficult to develop in the competitive industry.

Level 4: Micro Perspective, Doing Case Studies in Enterprises

Making micro-level analysis in anthropology, the researchers tend to ethnographically describe and analyze enterprises through fieldwork (Zhang 2016a). Compared with descriptions made by researchers from other disciplines in social sciences and humanities, anthropologist descriptions and field texts tend to be impressively detailed and rich. However, research in EA should be more than deep description. To put it another way, researchers are expected to make full use of data with their knowledge in such

domains as marketing, brand management, intangible cultural heritage, showing their expertise in industries like food, medicine, clothing, and so on (Zhang2016a).

As a member of the research team led by Professor Zhang, Wang (2016) conducted a case study to analyze the spirit of craftsmanship that is considered as an important factor in the core competitiveness of THBEs. The essence of craftsmanship spirit, according to the researcher, rests on shaping and cultivating a brand with meticulous attention to details in producing its products. Such spirit of craftsmanship determines the success of the enterprise and without such spirit, the craftsmanship may be lost in the enterprise development. Research indicates that the spirit of craftsmanship is particularly important in small-scale THBEs and it is the most essential intangible asset in the core competitiveness of enterprises (Wang 2016). This is mirrored in Wang's case study in Hu Kui Zhang Calligraphy Brush Workshop, a small business having merely 10 staff, but enjoying a history of more than 195 years. In this business entity, craftsmanship spirit has three specific connotations: (1) Having an exceptional patience to learn and practice the craftsmanship. The technique of making the calligraphy brush is known as a "living fossil" and extremely difficult to acquire. An apprentice usually spends one year on observing his master's technique and another three to five years on practicing this technique before he works independently in making brushing. Obviously, such a long process of learning and practice requires persistence in and commitment to the craftsmanship. (2) Determination to maintain the uniquely high quality of the calligraphy brush. Although the weasel-hair brush, the enterprise's unique product, takes much more time and cost to produce, the enterprise never fails to follow the complicated procedure that requires high-quality of hair, high-level techniques, and arduous work in producing a single brush. Impressively, generations of the owners of the enterprise share the strong consciousness that making bad quality brush is such a shame to their ancestors and offspring that they ought never to do so under any circumstances. In other words, they are determined to protect and sustain the craftsmanship passed down generation by generation. (3) Strong sense of the cultural value and identity. According to Wang's (2016) research, it is this sense of cultural value and identity shared by the people in the business that determines the inheritance of the spirit of craftsmanship.

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

As a research methodology formulated by Chinese anthropologists and widely applied to research and studies of Chinese enterprises, the Approach makes novel and important contributions to the methodological development in anthropology. First and foremost, by embracing the four-level analysis from macro, meso and micro perspectives, the methodology brings a panoramic view to enterprise studies. Most Chinese anthropological and ethnological research and studies are situated in a village or a particular society (Zhang 2016a; Huang and Chen 2017). By contrast, the Approach involves studies of a wide range of modern organizations and enterprises, addressing issues related to their political, economic, social, and cultural attributes. It is "a big step forward in the anthropological holistic classic" (Zhang 2016b, 24). Next, the Approach enriches research perspectives with its combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches (Zhang 2015a, 2016a, 2016c, 2017a; Huang and Chen 2017). As noted earlier, anthropologists tend to do research from the bottom-up perspective, seldom considering studies from upper-level perspectives represented by government officials and city planners (Zhang 2015a, 2016b, 2017a). Applying the methodology to the studies of enterprises, however, allows conducting research through different lens (Zhang 2015a). This is pertinently exemplified in the foregoing research in Shanghai Nanjing Pedestrian Street. In this research, issues of city competitiveness, commercial street planning, and enterprises were studied from both anthropologist (the bottom) and government (the top) perspectives (Zhang 2015a). In that sense, the analysis of enterprises points to the relevant issues at a broader context of the industry and the business circle of enterprises. By doing so, the government, city planners, and researchers may work together to formulate more effective and applicable policies for city development in urbanization. Thirdly, the Approach implies a mechanism to research enterprises with increasing complexity and difficulty at different levels of analysis. In terms of professional development,

this research mechanism informs a trajectory that anthropologists and ethnologists may experience or have in their academic life. More specifically and practically, researchers may start from doing case study in an enterprise at the micro level, and then develop their research to the meso and macro levels. Finally, as a methodology to study different types of business organizations, the Approach is applicable not only in EA but also in other sub-disciplines in anthropology. Given its micro, meso, and macro analysis of business, the methodology provides the breadth and resilience in anthropological studies and research.

Implications and Conclusion

However, as a new anthropological methodology developed in the Chinese context, three issues deserve attention and necessitate methodological development in the future research and studies. First, in terms of utilizing the Approach in researching enterprises in different cultures, there should be more comparative studies in EA, especially case studies contextualized in countries other than mainland China. As mentioned earlier, national culture is the focus of EA research; this highlights the importance of cross-cultural studies in the application and development of the methodology. Although we argue that the conceptualization of the Approach is applicable to enterprise studies in other countries besides China, what are the commonalities and differences in using these concepts to analyze enterprises having different cultures? For instance, when we employ the concept of *umbrella society* in studies of enterprises in the countries where governments exercise more leverage in societal development in such countries as Germany, Russia, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Malaysia², what similarities and differences can we make at the four-level analysis of enterprises in the same industry with different cultures? To promote cross-cultural enterprise studies between different countries, it is necessary to create more opportunities for academic exchanges and enhance networking research from international and comparative perspectives.

Secondly, to improve the measurability and accuracy in analysis of enterprises from macro, meso, and micro perspectives, the Approach should include quantitative components in its analytical framework. In this sense, social network analysis (e.g. Granovetter 1974; Bian 1997) provides some practical techniques and tools to be incorporated into the methodology. For instance, in studies of *beehive societies* at the meso level analysis of enterprises, what is the size of the “beehive” under investigation? In other words, what is the population of the *beehive society*? What are its density, connection, distribution, and segmentation? To what extent can strong and weak social contacts in networks impact on job change and mobility in this beehive society (Bian and Ang 1997)? Similarly, in analyzing the umbrella relationship in an enterprise at the macro level, it would be more measurable and accurate by using network analysis to examine such issues as “the centralization of authority and the enforcement of incentive mechanisms” (Zhou 2010, p. 47) in *umbrella societies*. By adding to the methodology the quantitative methods through network analysis, it not only increases opportunities to conduct cross-disciplinary research between anthropology and sociology, but also deepens the studies and research in EA.

Lastly, we propose that the Approach should be complemented with the four-level enterprise survey protocols and questionnaires that integrate scales and operations manuals at the multi-level analysis of enterprises. Referring to the research tools Malinowski (1944) used in his cultural anthropological studies, such quantitative research methods will certainly enhance the practicality and operational significance of research, which is conducive to the implementation and application of the methodology. Also, these research tools are helpful to anthropologists and researchers, particularly at their earlier academic life when they do not have much experience in conducting research from macro and meso perspectives without instrumental protocols and operational manuals.

Jordan (2018, 20) acknowledges the significance of EA research in Asia by saying, “EA captures some of the valuable work being conducted in this field in Asia. It is a welcome addition to the literature on business anthropology not only for the quality of the research but also because it demonstrates the growth of the field in Asia”. Theorized on Chinese social structural transformation and contextualizing its empirical studies in Chinese enterprises and national cultures, the formulation and application of the Approach attests to ending the historical period when Chinese scholars were following the westernized research paradigm in anthropology. More importantly, the methodology not only opens the door for

Chinese anthropologists and ethnologists to play an important role in EA, but also provides opportunities for researchers to have equal and in-depth collaboration between China and the rest of the world.

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ENDNOTES

1. The statistics were released in People's Daily, an official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Source: http://www.xinhuanet.com/2018-06/05/c_1122936264.htm.
2. In several academic occasions, the corresponding author had rich discussions and exchanges with the anthropologists and researchers from the countries mentioned. When he shared with them his research in the concept of umbrella society (see in the article entitled "The Umbrella Society: A new concept for observing social-economic structural transformation in China"), they resonated with him in use of this concept to analyze the enterprises in which the governments intervenes.

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