



# CITYMAKERS VOICES

Collected in a WeChat circle – and beyond  
between September 1<sup>st</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>

**“I am Annette. Currently I work on Co-Living projects in Wiesbaden for four areas. Providing land for people that are looking for new ways on living together as a community which benefits the whole neighborhood. I believe these incubators will create livable neighbourhoods and a more livable city.”**

**Annette Erpenstein**

**“I am Annette Mehlhorn 梅安宁, I live in Shanghai. For many years I engage in reflecting and caring for livable urban spaces. Between People as ‘living stones’ and in personal relationship caring, creative surroundings can flourish. As a theologian and theatre-performer I am specially interested in opening spaces for dialogue between people of different cultures and religions. Looking for the ‘soul’ of the city I am convinced that time and place for spiritual recharging is needed and has to be cared for. Living in Shanghai since 2013 als an intercultural project manager of Hamburg Liaison Office and protestant pastor of the German speaking Christian Congregation, I offer walks and discoveries for those who are interested in the history and present of this wonderful city.”**

**Annette Mehlhorn 梅安宁**

**“I’m Alexander, I live in Chengdu since 2018. I’m an architect working on big and small projects in different contexts at the same time. While city making, I wish that more people understand the importance of the city as an open (communicative & inclusive), aesthetic (well-designed beyond fashion) and tolerant (pluralistic) place and design its spaces and activities accordingly.”**

**“My name is Binke, I live in Beijing for many years and I am a co-founder and partner of Crossboundaries, a practice which is not only interested in architectural developments but bridging between many other disciplines. We have a strong focus on educational building types believing that they are extremely influential in terms of having social impact on people’s behaviour and lives. – We use our space in Beijing to engage actively with the community around us, inviting them to ‘make city’ together with us.”**

**Binke Lenhardt**

**“My name is Chen Xudong, I live in Shanghai. @Fanny, SH Flaneur, thanks for reminding me that we’re still the ‘old Fighters’ for architecture for such a long time, but now become ‘the new City Maker’ here, it’s amazing! In the rash changing of the Chinese urban environment, I’m always interested in which kind of stable value and consistent form could be continued, both by architectural practice and theoretical writing.”**

**Chen Xudong**

**“My name is Cheng Yi Heng. Usually I am in Shanghai, however since this February I came to Singapore with a plan to travel to Germany and Croatia. Due to COVID-19, I got ‘stuck’ here in Singapore at that time, the only place I could stay due to my Singaporean nationality. City making to me is changing all the time. It was municipal farming when I first had a project with Pan Tao, 4-5 years ago. Then ‘Belonging Feeling’ when I was engaged in a project in Beijiao, a town close to Shunde, Guangzhou, 2 years ago. Recently I am involved in a project at Jinshan, Shanghai, regarding hydrogen-based community. So now City Making to me is acceptance, learning and resilience of new technologies. Though my approach is still quite technical (specifically safety), but more towards dealing with emerging effects during adoption and evolution in the community.”**

**Chen Yi Heng**

**“I am an architect-urbanist. I work as a researcher and consultant on safe public spaces. I live in France. As a city maker, I strive to collaborate with urban actors to make public spaces that are safe, inclusive, and humane. I believe that security is much more than cameras and surveillance: it is creating welcoming public spaces for the most vulnerable. I believe in the importance of global exchange and local contexts.”**

**Edna Peza-Ramirez**

**“I am Elan, I am a new Berliner, I work as a designer and artist assistant. As a city maker I have a dream about finding out a suitable way of living on this planet for humans nowadays. I studied Architecture, have some years experience in bamboo products. Currently I am more an observer than a practitioner in cities livings. Very glad to join CITYMAKERS here, so I can share and learn so many new ideas.”**

**“My name is Eva Sternfeld. I am currently in Qingdao in a very nice hotel at the beach but cannot leave my room because we are under quarantine. One more week to go before I will go to Beijing to continue my work with the Sino-German Agricultural Center. Since my first visit in 1979 I have been to China on and off, altogether probably 14 years. The Chinese City I know best is Beijing, where I lived most of the time and witnessed the tremendous changes over the past 40 years. The same goes for my favorite German City Berlin, where I have been living since 1976. A sinologist and geographer by training I wrote my PhD thesis on Beijing urban development and water management. Through my present work I am I am now focussing on urban-rural relations. I think cities are representing a whole cosmos where one can find a great diversity. Although city planners and architects are important for the design of cities – the creation of liveable and lively cities depends from many more actors and factors. Therefore, CITYMAKERS is such a great network representing the whole range and diversity of researchers, practioners, activists, artists, communicators and other talents.”**

**Eva Sternfeld**

**“I am Harry den Hartog, urban designer and researcher living in Shanghai since 2009, faculty member at Tongji’s CAUP where I tutor design studios and lecture on housing and urban design to an international mix of students. I am also running my own research & design studio: <https://urbanlanguage.org>. As a city maker I try to contribute to making viable living environments that interact and relate with their context. Currently I am working on waterfront transitions in urban and rural China.”**

**Harry den Hartong**

**“I am Ines Racknitz, working as a prof for Chinese history at Nanjing university, currently in Berlin. I like to approach cities in the style of flanneurs: walking the streets, imagining times and peoples from the past that have walked here before me and made the city into what it is now. Thus, we are connected to the people from the past and are a link to the future; cities are made from the multitude and variety of peoples, who live, breathe and work in it. They are cosmopolitan entities and have their own personalities and characters.”**

**Ines Racknitz**

**“I am Katja, the program curator and facilitator of the CITYMAKERS China-Europe network. To me, city-making means building relationships more than houses. More precisely, I believe that if we relate deeply to nature, openly to culture, authentically to other people, and honestly to ourselves, then we can foster the natural development of sustainable living spaces. I love urban life and city culture, and have spent the longest uninterrupted stretch of my life – 16 years – in Shanghai, a megacity by any standard. However, I do now feel the urge to compensate for this by spending time in an allotment garden by the lake. I can feel in my body, as is often acknowledged in theoretical urbanization discussions, that cities and the countryside are two sides of the same coin of societal development, both of which are needed for greater balance. Other cities and villages on my life map include Essen, Tecklenburg, Aix-En-Provence, Bremen, Chengdu, Hohhot, Beijing and Hongkong. As a program designer and facilitator, my professional contribution in the process of city-making lies more in the intangible phase of building contextual understanding and co-creating ideas and concepts that pave the way for the actual ,making’.”**

**Katja Hellkötter**

**“I currently work on the Green Steps ARK. ARK is short for Activate body & mind, Restore planet and people, Know your bioregion. The Green Steps ARK is an out of the box solution to the climate crisis. It accelerates the impact of environmental education by connecting educators and learners in a gamified social network which is organized in bioregions. The ARK uses the addictive power of technology to drive long term behavioral change.**

**We are called to conceive cities and countryside as gargantuan learning environments and need to discuss the means and far end of education. Merging insights from human development psychology with space design will give us guidance in how both, city and countryside life, will improve the health of people and planet.”**

**Knut Wimberger**

**“I am quite active in the field of sustainable development of built environment with focus on strategy and policy in Germany, EU and China. I currently work on sustainable urban mobility in middle-sized European cities. As a city maker, I believe that practising experienced, experts-led co-creation is the key.”**

**“I'm Kenny 阿菜 based in Shanghai running a BCORP called BottleDream, which is a social innovation media and changemaker community. Basically, we do three things: 1. Tell the stories of changemakers all around the world via social media aiming to inspire Chinese young generation; 2. Provide research & creative service for brands about sustainability; 3. Building a e-commerce for sustainable consumption and promoting sustainable lifestyle.**

**And this year we also run a new project of building a eco village in Sichuan, which we are so excited about to explore new village model in China. We believe that everyone is a changemaker and that's why we use SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE as a path to inspire everyone to do something in their daily life.”**

**“My name is Kika Yang, I am a Sino-European-Brazilian graduate in architecture, urbanism and arts. Currently I am mainly working as a teacher, designer and media producer. I live in Berlin and visit China and my homeland often. As a city maker, I believe we can make our living environment more human and balanced.”**

**“I am an architect and urban geographer and have lived in several Chinese cities since 2003, Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai. I returned to Germany in 2019 and work as a consultant integrating planning disciplines in urban scale projects with a focus on smart city solutions. Together with Binke from Crossboundaries, I conducted ‘The Future of Living’, an incubator project on new forms of collective housing supported by the Bosch Stiftung.”**

**“I am Jan, European, I work as a photographer and host of a wonderful space called C\*SPACE, I live in Berlin with an Asian past, I believe in people and their power to change and create wonderful things. As a city maker I love to reflect visually on my environment, as a host I create an environment for an open and friendly community – serving our guests and partners to live and work best in their full potential. I strive to make every day a little adventure and discovery.”**

**Jan Siefke**

**“I’m Jana, a long-time aficionado of Chinese language & culture and a passionate learner of everything related to user experience design. I currently live in Berlin. As a city maker, I strongly believe in a people-centric and inclusive approach as a foundation for creating liveable cities.”**

Jana Brokate

**“My name is Jiaona Hu, I live in Berlin since 2016, coming from Beijing. I am studying my bachelor degree in architecture at Udk. I also work as an independent comic artist. Currently I'm interested in the relationship of the concept of ‘home’ to the place of ‘home’.”**

**“I am Maja Linnemann and recently I work as a translator for Chinese or English to German and live in Bremen, and sometimes in Beijing. I am not a city maker, rather a watcher, but I believe in cities as places where diversity flourishes.”**

**Maja Linnemann**

**“I am Marlene, I am co-founder of the housing platform wohnbuddy.com. With Wohnbuddy, we bring together young and elderly people for their mutual benefit. I live in Vienna. As a city maker, I care for affordable housing and for counteracting loneliness among young and elderly people in cities. I strive for cities where people can find a home where people live together and not next to each other.”**

**Marlene Welzl**

**“I’m Miriam, crazy for digital experiences and manifestations of digital innovations in urban space. I am a serial entrepreneur and creator, living between Europe and Asia. As a city maker, I believe digital literacy and re-igniting identity as a basis for meaningful participation is the biggest challenge for our developed societies.”**

**Miriam Theobald**

**“I am Michael Pruss, I currently live in Shanghai (when not in corona-exile). I work as an independent healthcare design consultant (mostly for German Fresenius group) in master planning, pre-project and feasibility studies; for me the key values of a healthy city are: health, care and vitality.”**

**Michael Pruss**

**“I am Oliver, I currently live in Stuttgart physically as well as in many virtual China imaginaries :). I work as a project manager at the Robert Bosch Stiftung and helped a bit bringing the CITYMAKERS community to life. As a city maker I care for an urban environment that helps citizens shape an awareness that their opinions matter and that cities can be functioning and even caring communities of like-minded strangers. My key question during the covid crisis which unearthed a lot of anti-Asian sentiments and aggressions is, how to build trust and provide space for honest conversations about your and my prejudices and fears and where can we start learning again from each other as peers.”**

**Oliver Radtke**

**“I’m an artist, film maker, curator, writer, publisher and activist, currently based in Jingzhou, Hubei. I produced two documentary films on urban villages and slums (San Yuan Li, 2003; Meishi Street, 2006), and was appointed as the chief curator of 2009 Shenzhen & Hong Kong Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture. In the last decade, my work mainly focused on rural reconstruction. I founded the Bishan Project in an Anhui village in 2010, living and working there for more than six years. Then I moved to New York as a visiting professor of GSAPP, Columbia University, teaching “City and Countryside in China” and “Curatorial Practices and Placemaking” for two semesters (2016-2017). At the same time, I was appointed as the director of a city regeneration and historical preservation project in Yantai, Shandong (Kwan-Yen Project, 2016-2018). I became the research fellow (2019-2020) of Center for Arts, Design and Social Research (CAD+SR) in Boston, mainly working on a new book about the communitarian experiments and utopian practices in different countries from 19th century. Now I’m working as the senior fellow of CAD+SR for a new project Cosmological Gardens: Land, Cultivation and Care. My collected writings (2010-2020) on rural reconstruction will be published by Palgrave Macmillan next month.”**

**Ou Ning 欧宁**

**“My name is Pan Tao, a 5-year Citymaker folk. Studied 20 years ago in Germany and many years in international NGOs, specializing in the city climate action plan, worked and supported many cities in China for green and low carbon development. 10 years ago I founded the Ecoland Club Farm, the first Schrebergarten farm in China. And this year we have opened the second farm in Shanghai, and are preparing our third farm Kunming. Maybe in the near future, we will have our fourth Schrebergarten farm in Germany, featuring the cross-fertilizing between youth development and senior retirements.”**

Pan Tao

**“I studied urban planning and worked in the area of UNESCO world heritage in the past 15 years at different capacities. I have worked as an expert on historic urban landscape approach to analyse values and changes of historic cities. I was in the consultation group on heritage impact assessment in the decision-making process of urban management. I also participated in the UNESCO sustainable tourism program. Recently I started a new journey. I am working with two world heritage sites to develop E-learning curricula for youth (9-15). Great to know more people from the community and I am looking forward a fruitful exchange with you.”**

**“I am Sandy Wang, living in Berlin since 2018, I used to live in Shanghai for 20 years, I had many contracts with Chinese traditional artists when I was in Shanghai, they are not so famous but surviving with art. Currently I am not doing anything special, but happy to join the CITYMAKERS group and wish we can have a great time together.”**

**Sandy Wang**

**“I am Sebastian and a passionate architect and urbanist. I live in the Ruhr Metropolis in Germany, which is a true hotspot of transformation. Come and see! In the context of CITYMAKERS I take care of the CITYMAKERS-Ruhr network. And I believe that common city making makes the world even better – let’s co-create the future city!”**

**Sebastian Schlecht**

**“I am a writer, curator and art critic. I did my Ph.D.in philosophy from the University of Münster, Germany. Afterwards I worked as editorial director of Art World magazine and editor-in-chief in a publishing house. I established my own team since 2015, which focuses on making cultural events and exhibitions. I got involved deeply in the art community. Now more and more developers and shopping malls are inviting me to give advice for their ‘artistic planning’. So in a way, I am involved in the making of the city. I hope art can be part of the society and be one dimension in the making of the city.”**

**“I am Silvan, I work as a freelance editor and video-journalist in the culture and urbanization dialogue between China and Europe. As a city maker I care for new online and offline dialogue formats and humor in knowledge transfer.”**

**Silvan Hagenbrock**

**“My name is Silva Jährling. I originally studied sinology and cultural anthropology in Germany, focusing on Chinese film history and am now managing the cultural projects at Goethe-Institut (China) in Beijing. We’ve had a lot of exciting projects reflecting on urban life and changing cityscapes with great partners, such as the ongoing project Beijing 22. Looking at city making from a more personal perspective, I often wonder what a perfect city should look like – ‘escaping’ from the small town I grew up in, now living in Beijing, enjoying the buzz of the big city but sometimes missing quick and easy ways to take a break from it.”**

**Silva Jährling**

**“I am an artist, a designer and also a teacher at Shaanxi Normal University Academy of Arts. I have been recording and studying local culture of urban and rural areas, and I want to take them into practice, so I started the Local book series in 2007, to record local culture and urban memories. I have designed and transformed the old factory workshop into a public culture space – Xi’an Urban Memories Museum in 2015. I have collected and sorted out a lot of personal memory and objects, and displayed them in this space. Every item represents a single person and his or her urban memories. Every single person can be a whole city. As an artist, it is not enough only to express, but to pay close attention to the reality, and more important, to change the reality little by little in different ways. Nowadays we're involved in a lot of urban renewal projects.”**

**Song Qun**

**“I am Sonja, I work at the interface between the architecture of urban areas, neighbourhood and city development, science, art, culture and journalism. My home base is the Ruhr area. As a city maker I believe that there IS such thing as society – contrary to the famous quote of Margret Thatcher.”**

**“I am a professor at Communication University of China. My area of research and expertise are in urban design and cultural sustainability. One of my recent projects was curating an exhibition called ‘Urban Spirit: Contemporary Public Design Archives’. This exhibition went on in Beijing and Zhuhai. Currently, I am working on a research project about re-utilizing old or abandoned factory premises.**

**I think the key to a livable city is about humanization. I have brought up a point on interactive interface that the city provides to the residents, and how friendly it is determining the overall quality of urban life. Design conception is critical in creating a friendly human-city interactive interface.”**

**“I’m Xiaoyuan. Now I’m doing my PhD of philosophy in Paris. Plus, I’m studying art project and theatre management. I’m interested in creating a platform between amateur artists and abandoned space in order to provide more possibilities for both sides.”**

**“I am an architect based in HK and teaching and researching at HKU. I have been researching neighborhood-scale transformations in areas that seemed to globally-integrate rapidly under economic transition in Shanghai, which was published as a book three years ago. I am currently writing my next book looking at art spaces in HK/SH/SG which is again a moving target. Good city making produces a cultural richness and diversity that facilitates resilience, which is important as the whole world faces the unexpected aftermaths of this pandemic.”**

**“I am Yimeng Wu, designer, illustrator and book artist born in Shanghai, based in Berlin. My design office ‘Studio Wu 無’ is specialized for intercultural design between China and Europe. I also teach at universities in China and Germany on the topics of urban artistic discoveries and multilingual design. I am glad to be part of the CITYMAKERS core team as artistic director responsible for the visual identity.”**

Yimeng Wu

**“My name is Yu Jiaying, I am a local Shanghainese. I studied communication design at Tongji University, but now I’m working in Marketing & PR at one of the Marriott brand hotels in the city. I have been working with Cityexplorers to offer out-of-the-ordinary experiences (guided tours) to guests and I’m looking for more opportunities for people to get to know the city. Together with Mr. Chen Gang (Composer of Butterfly Lovers 梁祝), Mrs. Yan Hua, a host of dragon television, I had the chance to incubate a monthly cultural salon called Colormen 克勒门 in which we invite artists, musicians, writers, and even government officials to share the untold story lost in time. To me, the perfect city should be designed to help people achieve balance in life, both physically and psychologically. I discovered this in Berlin 3 years ago when I first stepped into that city and then it inspired me to complete my first self-published book MEIN BERLIN.”**

**Yu Jiaying**

**“My name is Yolanda von Hagen. I connected the first time with China within a Chinese-German exchange program of the University of Applied Science Dortmund in 2005. 26 German and Chinese students lived in a historic coal mining area to explore the Emscher region through multicultural lenses. I studied for a year in Beijing and since 2010 I live as architecture and documentary photographer in Shanghai. My passion for urban learning and bridging China and the West brought me to Shanghai Flaneur in 2011. In 2013, I joined a landscaping company with focus on vertical gardens in urban environments. As a city maker I strive to bring awareness to issues of the emotional well-being that comes with our modern globalized lifestyle.”**

**Yolanda von Hagen**

**“I am Zhen Zhang. I do research in the history and theory of architecture. As a city maker, I set focus on the everyday life and on creating well balanced environment, for both the collective and the individual, with the possibility to let individual needs and development unfold.”**

Zhen Zhang

**“I am a type designer based in Hangzhou. I focus on multi-scriptal (like Chinese and Latin) typeface design, as well as typographic matchmaking. Besides type design, I am also interested in other subjects. Together with anthropologists, I have been working on a project called Citytype. I studied design in Germany more than 10 years ago.”**

**Zheng Chuyang**

**“I am ZHU Shu, living in Beijing and Seoul, and working for ICLEI- a global city network/association for sustainable urban development via 5 key pathways: low-emission, resilient, nature-based, circular and people-centered. Our current projects in China focus on integrating/mainstreaming nature-based solutions and urban biodiversity conservation into urban planning and strategy, e.g. applying NBS in urban renewal to cope with various urban risks and challenges. My belief is that urban inhabitants should live in harmony and in respect of nature.”**