

CHINA CROSSROADS

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Comparing Chinese Entrepreneurial Business Cultures in Southern China and Southeast Asia

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Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Hub

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From Guangdong's manufacturing clusters to Bangkok's family conglomerates, Chinese and Southeast Asian entrepreneurs share deep cultural roots yet diverge in how they adapt to fast-changing markets. Drawing on a decade of consulting and research in the region, this talk explores how Cantonese, Teochew, Hokkien, and Hakka business traditions—shaped by Confucian values, diaspora networks, and relational trust—translate into distinct entrepreneurial behaviors across Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Myanmar. This talk contrasts the state-aligned, scale-driven digital transformation of mainland China with the pragmatic, succession-led strategies of overseas Chinese enterprises embedded in relational economies. These cultural logics shape risk, innovation, and leadership under varied institutional environments—from Singapore's formalized systems to Thailand's relationship-based ecosystems, Vietnam's rapidly evolving digital landscape, Malaysia's modernization as a middle-income economy, Indonesia's geographic complexity, and Myanmar's politically constrained markets.

Pietro Borsano is an Associate Professor at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, Entrepreneur College (near Shanghai, China). He specializes in entrepreneurship education, industry-academic partnerships, and venture development across Europe, ASEAN, and China. He is also an advisor to the Global Academy at Siam University, an innovative TNE initiative, and an adjunct professor at the Asian Institute of Technology and at the Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation. Previously, he was Deputy Executive Director (equivalent of vice-dean) at Chulalongkorn University's School of Integrated Innovation (Bangkok, Thailand), where he co-founded the institution, developed global partnerships, and designed its entrepreneurship curriculum. He has led industry projects with Alibaba Group, Banpu Pcl., PTTEP, Huawei, and Business Online Pcl. among others. Pietro has advised tech startups, VCs, and government innovation programs, serving as a Peer Review Expert for Hong Kong's Innovation and Technology Venture Fund and a Venture Fellow at MeetVentures Singapore. His research focuses on digital transformation and entrepreneurship in family businesses. With a background in corporate law (University of Turin) and business administration (ESCP Business School), he has taught in multiple universities and co-founded a management consultancy and provided strategic consulting on market expansion and innovation, driving significant growth for industrial clients across East and Southeast Asia.

China Crossroads hosts talks on all topics related to China, including business, foreign policy, and other areas as they relate to China, the idea being that China is both already a "crossroads" of the world and itself at a "crossroads" in terms of its future global influence. For more information, contact Frank Tsai at editor@shanghai-review.org.