

Proposal for participation in the “Great Global Hackerspace Challenge”

Xinchejian, Shanghai, China (<http://xinchejian.com>)

The city that hosts Xinchejian has a population of 23 millions¹ mixed with hundreds of thousands of foreigners. Shanghai has also the busiest container port in the world², a symbol of its role as the geographic and historic gateway from the most populated country to the rest of the world. Shanghai architecture is a mix of two centuries: the 20th century foreign concessions and the 21st century Chinese hypermodernity. Walking around feels like simultaneously living in both the past and the future – a perfect place for an Hackerspace!

The importance of education is deeply embedded in Chinese culture because of the long tradition of imperial examination throughout 1300 years of imperial dynasties. This way to socially advance made learning (and especially memorizing) seem essential. Now entire neighborhoods are host to “cram schools” that prepare children for entrance examination. This creates hardworking students with encyclopedic knowledge but with little experience in problem solving, teamwork and leadership. Modern Chinese parents know about this educational gap and are increasingly moving towards offering different opportunities to their children where creating replaces copying and teamwork replaces competition³.

As a parallel, shanzhai culture (*Chinese imitation and pirated brands and goods, particularly electronics*) is a starting point to a generation of designers. Copying skills of Shenzhen engineers are unequaled. However these impressives but mocked feats serve only as a stepping stone toward a new generation of Xin (**new**) Shanzhai products that will better the original products by integrating creative extensions. Xinchejian, has an essential role to play in teaching the new generation while benefiting from being located in the factory of the world where we can find a natural focus on cost-control and mass production.

Xinchejian serves as a beacon of free spirited and uninhibited creation, both artistic and technological, to serve people that hunger for intellectual and economic advancement. It is a community of westerners and Chinese, young and old, experienced or not, artistic or cartesian. This purpose is in itself imminently educational and the achievements so far include teaching youngsters electronics, getting university students on the track of ambitious robotics projects and attracting digital artists. We also have an history of exciting and extensive project updates through our blog and active participation in various local events to recruit members.

For the purpose of the “Great Global Hackerspace Challenge”, we will focus on getting the Chinese elementary school students acquainted with the intellectual processes of cooperative problem solving with out-of-the-box thinking. This will translate into an interactive and intelligent educational toy that stimulates students into a variety of challenging experiences.

Our participation on the global stage would be an honor and a great way to kick off the second iteration of the Shanghai Hackerspace in a larger space at a new location this month. China is still at the beginning of a long transition out of a manufacturing economy. We are uniquely positioned to see how the open source DIY culture interacts with this transition.

1 <http://www.cnn.com/shanghai/life/shanghai-just-officially-got-bit-more-crowded-096925>

2 http://www.straitstimes.com/BreakingNews/Singapore/Story/STIStory_621944.html

3 <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703766704576008692493038646.html>