

# “CHINA GOING OUT” OR “THE WORLD GOING IN”?

THE SHANGHAI WORLD EXPO  
2010 IN THE SWEDISH MEDIA

GÖRAN SVENSSON

## Abstract

Public diplomacy, nation branding and soft power are the theoretical notions used in this analysis of the Shanghai Expo 2010 and its reception in the Swedish media. This article studies the full coverage during 2010 of the Expo in the four main Swedish dailies. First, a general overview of the reports is presented and then a focused analysis of how the media texts deal with (a) reasons for arranging/participating (b) representation of China/Sweden (c) reporting about outcomes of the Expo and (d) reporting on the international exhibition phenomena. The major conclusion of the study is that Expo 2010 contributed to China’s “going global” strategy in a specific way; rather than being used as a vehicle for China “going out” in the world, it became a vehicle for Sweden, and the world, “going in” to China. Another observation discussed is that the international exhibition form was used to de-mediate interactions and relations, offering situated meetings in a unique event context as a node for further mediated communication.

Göran Svensson is Lecturer in the Department of Informatics and Media at Uppsala University; e-mail: Goran.Svensson@im.uu.se.

## Introduction

The 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing helped to communicate images of a transforming China to the world. The world media reported from the games in great detail and also covered the preparation for this global event, including political protest and disturbances of the Torch Relay (Qing and Richeri 2010). The games also helped to catalyse a new approach to international communication in China, where huge investments in the production and distribution of news, television and radio through both analogue and digital platforms assured a Chinese media presence on the global media scene (Brownell 2013). This policy change was most evident in 2009, when 45 billion Yuan was allocated to develop Chinese state media and international news (Zhao 2013).

In the same year, Shanghai and China were preparing for a second global event, Expo 2010 in Shanghai. With the participation of 190 countries this exhibition attracted 73 million visitors during its six months of operation (SOU 2011). The expo grounds, with its pavilions and activities, became yet another “ephemeral vista” (Greenhalgh 1988) where a world of flaneurs could stroll, meet and talk, being sublimely impressed (Nye 1994) by the stunning feats of mankind assembled and condensed in this enclosed time-space. The World Expo in Shanghai 2010 is an example of a specific social and cultural form of communication – the general international exhibition (Rydell 1984; Findling and Pelle 1990; Allwood 2001). From the Crystal Palace exhibition of 1851 and up to Shanghai 2010, this form has become institutionalised in a specific way and since 1928 has been formalised under the Bureau International des Expositions, which registers and thereby consecrates this kind of event.<sup>1</sup> Economic, political, cultural and social interests are blurred in these events as states, companies, civic organisations and individuals participate in the event with mixed and sometimes conflicting motives. How the interests of the arranging country and the participating countries, and their representatives, are articulated is a main issue in these events. Being an event bound to a specific place and time, this form of communication and the reception of the exhibition are dependent on the combined experience of visitors on the spot and the international and global mediation of the event.

Expo 2010 was an important stage in the communication of images of China to the world. This article addresses the representation and reception of the Shanghai Expo 2010 in Sweden, and the analysis links questions about the form and role of public diplomacy, nation branding and soft power to the world exhibition as a site and form of communication and interaction. The main result presented is that Expo 2010 was not a way for China to become more present and visible in the world through the mediation of the event. Instead, it was the participating countries, in our case Sweden, which were in focus in the media reports. The Shanghai Expo 2010 was, in this sense, not about China “going out” in the world but about the world “going in” to China. It is also claimed that the Shanghai Expo 2010 was not a new way of appropriating the international expo form but rather the reverse. The event served to de-mediate the new conditions of global communication, politics and commerce by refocusing attention on the experience of being there and on the capacity to open up China for new international relations and contacts.

## The New Public Diplomacy, Nation Branding, Soft Power and the International Exhibition

Public diplomacy is the term most often used for analysing how states communicate with publics in the international arena (Snow and Taylor 2009) and the new public diplomacy is a term used to describe the new conditions facing international relations dealing with new actors in international and global policy processes, new communication conditions and the geopolitical situation post 9/11 (Pamment 2011, 46-51). According to Cull (2008, 32), public diplomacy can be divided into five kinds of practices: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy and international news broadcasting. The basic idea of public diplomacy is the openness in the process and that it entails communication between political leadership/government and foreign publics. Listening means surveying and collecting relevant information from the environment and making use of it in designing public diplomacy. Advocacy means all the communicative efforts that are made to make points or policies known to external publics. Cultural diplomacy is the use of arts and all kind of culture to build relations between countries such as arranging art exhibitions, cultural events or language education. Exchange diplomacy is the practice of sending citizens overseas for periods of study and acculturation and reciprocally receiving citizens from foreign countries. International news broadcasting is the use of radio, television or the Internet to reach foreign publics (Cull 2008, 32-36).

New public diplomacy is a catch-all word for the challenges that established ways of doing public diplomacy are faced with. Linked to politics, it addresses all the new actors and stakeholders in global and international policy processes. International communication is no longer, and may never have been, carried out between states or representatives of states. International organisations, NGOs, private organisations (companies and interest organisations) and individuals have new roles to play in policy processes, now often seen as processes of governance. In this respect, new public diplomacy is challenged to coordinate the communication between these actors rather than communicating to them. Public diplomacy may develop into a communication that goes from one public to another public (Snow 2010, 91-92).

Digital communication and the media offer new tools and practices for collecting, sorting, analysing and distributing information. Listening to the world is enhanced by digital surveillance technology and new tools for analysing Internet and digital media of all kinds. Social media also become relevant as an area for listening to what is said about a country.

New media also bring new tools for advocacy. Not only public relations and spin are making use of the press, radio and TV; their digital versions, accessed using computers, smart phones and reading tablets, are also being used and monitored. The interactive features of digital media also bring in the public to respond to or participate in the communication process. The Swedish Institute introduced the idea of curating micro-blogging into public diplomacy, and state websites of countries are developing into social media. Besides public diplomacy activities a plethora of information and services of relevance for a country are available on the Internet through, for instance, Google, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter or Wikipedia. Among the five forms of public diplomacy that Cull uses, international broadcasting is

probably the one undergoing the greatest change at the moment. Global television broadcasting and news for a global audience is no longer an issue for the West. CNN, BBC World News and Al Jazeera are now under competition from CCTV International and Russia Today. To what extent CCTV International and Russia Today are the mouthpieces of their respective governments is an issue that will not be addressed in this article. In the case of CCTV International, its use of program formats, forms of journalism and audience address gives it an international style of news-making comparable to the news flow coming from CNN or the BBC. Digital distribution also makes it possible to add new channels and to distribute radio over the Internet.

Nation branding can be seen as the business version of the public diplomacy issue. It deals essentially with the ways states can attract tourists and investment capital, but also with the nation brand as an asset for export. Public diplomacy and nation branding go together in that they articulate the political and economic aspects of international communication relations. Nation branding has the economy in focus and uses the relative image and reputation of a country to design policies and strategies to attract tourists and capital and to enhance exports (Anholt 2007). Since these economic goals are also vital political goals in growth-oriented state economies, especially under neo-liberal-influenced political regimes, the close link between public diplomacy and nation branding becomes obvious. This close connection between the economic and the political goals also holds for China. Developing the Chinese economy makes nation branding relevant, and sustaining the political system through this economic development brings in the public diplomacy aspect.

A third way of approaching international communication relations between states is through the idea of soft power. This concept was developed by Joseph S. Nye and is succinctly described as “the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment. A country’s soft power rests on its resources of culture, values, and policies” (Nye 2008, 94). Public diplomacy and nation branding are closely tied to the idea of soft power. Nation branding is more linked to the economic relations between countries (exports/imports/tourism) and in that respect also to hard economic power, but it also has essential aspects of information, communication and culture built into its practices. Tourism is the obvious example where experiences are created through visits to places and interaction with people in these places. The work and the communication surrounding exports and imports are also processes where such meetings and communication across state borders take place and identities, images and experiences are made and shared. The trade in cultural goods and the values they carry are another aspect of soft power connected to exports and imports. Hollywood’s movies and their global impact and the generally ideological impact of cultural goods are an important aspect of soft power.

All five practices of public diplomacy fall under the soft-power term, but in different ways. Listening and advocacy can be seen as intelligence and strategic communication under the state agency umbrella. Cultural and exchange diplomacy together establish an arena where culture and people interact in new patterns. International news broadcasting brings in journalism and new forms of process journalism and network journalism where user-generated content and the participation of users becomes more important. All these practices highlight the

political aspect of soft power, but we can also see that the political goals support the economic goals. Being a country that is informed, heard, present and part of multiple kinds of exchange can also translate into the economy. To articulate public diplomacy and nation branding so that they enhance the soft power of a state can be seen as the main, and magic, goal of strategically successful international communication linked to a state.

Finally, how are world and international exhibitions to be seen in the light of public diplomacy, nation branding and international soft power? International exhibitions can be considered the testing ground, archetype and undifferentiated practice of all three, the first modern and international complex social and cultural form where economic, political and cultural values and goods are mixed and where products, politics and people interact, juxtaposing mutual understanding and strategic action. In the beginning, the international exhibition was conceived as a competition between nations in culture and progress, just like the Olympics. From 1851 to 1900, a series of monumental exhibitions were arranged in Europe and the USA. These exhibitions were signs of extreme modernity during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, world and international exhibitions were held all over the globe under the control of the BIE, but during the latter part of the century world exhibitions were questioned as being too costly and an inefficient way of using funds available for public diplomacy and nation branding for developing soft power (e.g. Seville 1992, Hannover 2000). The reason was that the components of the international exhibition had been permanently institutionalised in different forms of public diplomacy, trade fairs and tourism marketing. The temporary and ephemeral vistas of the exhibition had been replaced by the permanent and systematic organisation of communication by states, companies and private bodies during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the final decades of the century.

So why should China hold a world exhibition, as this mode of communication seems to be outdated – an innovation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? And what impact could we expect the Expo to have abroad in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this globally connected and digitally communicating century? By studying the reports in Swedish dailies, this article will give preliminary answers to these questions.

## The Case – Expo Reports in Four Swedish Dailies

The coverage of the Shanghai World Expo during 2010 in the four main national dailies in Sweden was analysed; all the articles mentioning the Expo during this year (before, during and after the event) were covered. A general overview of the publicity was produced, and a comparison was made between two kinds of dailies, up-market and down-market, in terms of volume, date of publication and type of contents. Four specific questions were also asked about the representation of China and Sweden in the texts: (a) How are the reasons for arranging and participating in the event reported? (b) How are China and Sweden represented in the reports – with a focus on the event itself, or with a focus on the context of the event? (c) How are the outcomes of the exhibition reported – for Chinese and Swedish interests? (d) How do the reports address the world exhibition as a cultural form of communication?

Based on the answers to these questions, the possible impact of the expo reception in Sweden on Chinese public diplomacy, nation branding and soft power will

be discussed, together with the use of the world exhibition as a form of communication.

### Method and Material

The dailies that were studied are *Dagens Nyheter*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen*.<sup>2</sup> *Dagens Nyheter* (DN) and *Svenska Dagbladet* (SvD) are subscribed morning papers with a national distribution. Having this national readership makes them the two biggest national morning papers in Sweden. The editorial ambition of the dailies is to offer high-quality news with a broad coverage of different topics. Printed in the night but read in the morning, they will be called the morning dailies in this text. *Aftonbladet* (AB) and *Expressen* (Exp) are more popular tabloid dailies covering news and events of the day in a more sensationalist manner. Both focus on sport, celebrities and entertainment in their mix of news. They are printed in the morning and read during the day and evening and for that reason are called evening papers in Sweden.<sup>3</sup>

Table 1: Circulation and Reach of the Four Newspapers, 2010

Title	Mean circulation	Reach Sunday	Reach Weekday
<i>Aftonbladet</i>	320,200	1,112,000	1,130,000
<i>Dagens Nyheter</i>	298,200	898,000	858,000
<i>Expressen</i> including <i>GT</i> och <i>Kvällsposten</i>	286,500	990,000	1,112,000
<i>Svenska Dagbladet</i>	192,800	515,000	493,000

Source: Upplage- och Räckviddsutveckling 2001-2010.

These four dailies were chosen because they have a national coverage and are in that respect the four most important Swedish dailies as possible carriers of information about Expo 2010 to Swedish readers.

The articles were collected by using two databases – Retriever and Presstext<sup>4</sup> – and searching these full text databases of the dailies from 2010. Three search strings were used: “expo 2010,” “shanghai” and “world exhibition”<sup>5</sup>. For comparison, a search for the word “China” was also made.

Table 2: Search Query and Results

Title	“expo 2010”	“shanghai”	“world exhibition”	Relevant Hits	Relevance level 1	Relevance level 2	Relevance level 3	“China”
DN	6	151	49	31	8	13	10	1,225
SvD	11	201	53	45	16	18	11	1,299
AB	4	83	25	19	5	7	7	395
Exp	4	134	29	24	6	12	6	512
Sum	25	569	156	119	35	51	33	3,431

The three search terms gave a result of 750 texts. By reading and comparing all these texts, a total of 119 relevant texts were then selected for further analysis. The basic criteria for this selection were that the text should make an explicit reference to the Shanghai 2010 Expo.

Three levels of relevance were then introduced to further classify the articles. The first level was articles in which the Shanghai Expo was only mentioned, but where it was clearly out of focus; 33 texts were categorised in this way. On the second level of relevance, articles that fully, mainly or in a substantial way referred to the Expo were coded; 51 texts were given this level of relevance. On the third level of relevance were the main pieces, the longer articles, in different journalistic genres, describing, commenting or discussing the Expo event in a more extensive way; 35 articles were identified in this category. All the 119 texts were read and analysed and hence contribute to the result of this study.

When designing the study, a conscious choice was made to focus on the articles that mention Expo 2010. This means that we cannot report how China in general was represented in the dailies studied during 2010. On the other hand, the study covers all that was published about the Expo. Further studies, widening the scope of analysis, are needed. The articles in this study could be compared with a sample of articles referring to China. In addition, further comparisons with the media coverage of China in other countries should also be made<sup>6</sup>.

### An Overview of the Publicity

World Expos being major international events, they should be of interest for national dailies with an aim to cover international issues. The Expo was expected to attract 70 million visitors, which it surpassed by 3 million, and since Sweden also participated, we should expect coverage of both the event and the Swedish participation. But how much publicity can a global event of this kind generate in national dailies? During 2010, China was mentioned in more than 3,000 texts in the four dailies, but only a small proportion of the texts, 3.5 percent, made explicit reference to the Expo. One of the striking results of our investigation is this comparatively low number of articles referring to Expo 2010 – just 119 in the four dailies during the whole year.

The event was reported in all four dailies, but with a distinct difference between the morning and evening dailies. The morning dailies had a more extensive coverage while the evening dailies presented a thinner description of the event. The media representation of a planned event can be divided into the before, during and after phases. In this case, the event had a six-month time span, starting on 1st May and ending on 31st October 2010. Taking into account that the three phases consisted of four, six and two months respectively, we would expect the publicity to focus on the six months of the actual event, because this is the longest phase, but

Table 3: Phases of the Publicity Process

Title	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Relevant	L1	L2	L3
DN	9	15	7	31	8	13	10
SvD	13	27	5	45	16	19	10
AB	5	14	0	19	5	7	7
Exp	5	17	2	24	6	12	6
Sum	32	73	14	119	35	51	33
%	27	61	12				
Expected	33	50	17				

also because we would expect the event to generate news from activities. The four dailies published roughly according to such expectations. Both the morning and the evening dailies have the expected ratio of publicity before the event, but the evening papers focus most of their attention on the event as it is unfolding. *Aftonbladet*, for instance, did not mention the Expo after the closing day, and *Expressen* only had two texts for this phase.

The content of the coverage can be summarised in the following way: general information about the event, reporting on the Swedish preparation, opening days, reporting on the programme in and visits to the Swedish pavilion and summing up with closing figures and prizes awarded. Following the three levels of relevance, we can once again see a difference between the evening and morning dailies. The morning dailies give a fuller representation of how the Expo was prepared and conducted. They also briefly report on the closing of the Expo. The evening dailies do not give the event the same amount of attention; they have fewer articles and shorter texts, except in one area of coverage: their focus on royalties and the young member of the Swedish royal family visiting China and the Expo.

*Expressen*. In *Expressen* we find only two long articles giving more detailed information or views on the event and six articles reporting on the visit of the Crown Princess of Sweden. Among the former two texts, one is a letter to the editor written by a Swedish government representative, the other one a news article about a Swedish government delegation and its visit to China and the Expo. Both of these texts have a Swedish perspective. They are about Sweden or offer a Swedish perspective on relations with China. The reports on the Crown Princess also have a clear Swedish focus, but one of the articles also conducts a discussion on how the diplomatic relations between Sweden and China are to be handled, bringing the representation of China into the reports.

*Aftonbladet*. In *Aftonbladet* we find three articles that can be considered central to how the paper generally covered the event and four articles focusing on the Crown Princess's visit. Among the general articles, the first is a news article describing a Swedish government delegation visiting China and the Expo, the same as *Expressen* wrote about. The second article is a feature-oriented travel article, urging travellers to go to Shanghai to experience the city and Expo 2010. The third article is a commentary on the event, written by one of Sweden's most famous journalists/authors. In this article he puts Expo 2010 in the context of the history of exhibitions and also gives his view on the event and China. Four articles report from the Crown Princess's visit to China and the Expo. In these articles there is a focus on Sweden and the royalties, but we also find a discussion on how the diplomatic relations with China are to be handled in the light of Liu Xiaobo being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. These reports are a mix of celebrity journalism and political journalism, questioning China's actions and how the Swedish royalties should act in the situation. *Aftonbladet* tracks this story as it unfolds during the royalties visit to China.

*Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*. The morning dailies give the event more attention throughout the process. Both of them carry articles describing how Sweden is preparing for participation in the Expo. They also publish articles about Shanghai and China opening up towards the world and publish reports from the opening days of the Expo. Later follow reports on the program and visits to the



Swedish pavilion. Both also carry a feature article in the travel sections about the event during the Expo. *Dagens Nyheter* also contains one news article summing up the event from a Swedish perspective. In contrast to the evening papers, the link between the Nobel Peace Prize and the Expo is only made in one article in *Svenska Dagbladet*. The other article has the story of Liu Xiaobo, but it is not connected to the Expo. The reason is that only one of the morning papers reports on the Swedish royalties visiting China and Shanghai.

The general impression from reading all these texts is that most of the articles report and discuss Sweden and how Swedish interests were promoted in China during the Expo. But how was China itself represented in the dailies?

## Reasons, Images, Outcome, and the Expo Form

The analysis of how China was represented is based on the 35 articles giving the most in-depth description of the event. The representation of China will also be compared to the representation of Sweden.

### Reasons for Arranging and Participating in the Event

The event is seen as a “gigantic party for the return of China as a super power” in one of the morning dailies.<sup>7</sup> The same article also claims that Expo 2010 in China has been given the same status as the 2008 Olympics. In a feature article on Shanghai it is claimed that this is an occasion for China to show the world, and especially the Chinese people, the influence that China has in the world.<sup>8</sup> World expos are “gigantic events of propaganda for the arranging country,” according to one of the columns in an evening paper, “to show the political and economic ambitions, its capacity, technical and cultural skills and often also the hopes carrying into the future.”<sup>9</sup> Each arranging country tries to outdo the preceding expos, according to the columnist.

The motives for Swedish participation are described as strengthening the image of Sweden in China, building a platform for developing deeper business relations with China and highlighting Swedish values.<sup>10</sup> Marketing the country and developing new opportunities for Swedish companies to make business are also stressed.<sup>11</sup> The main target groups for this campaign are decision-makers and educated, young, urban people. In one of the evening papers the visibility motive is highlighted again; economic development combined with issues of sustainability and corporate social responsibility are also pointed out as potential areas of cooperation between Sweden and China, the headline even claiming that “We can make China a better country.”<sup>12</sup> A precise summary of the Swedish motives is expressed in another evening paper article, describing a visit from a Swedish government delegation: “The purpose is to strengthen cooperation with China in areas of innovation, green technology, entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility.”<sup>13</sup> In the other evening paper, the economic motive is also paramount and it is pointed out that China is evolving into one of the most important markets for Swedish companies.<sup>14</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn is that reports on Chinese motives for arranging the Expo are out of focus and the Swedish participation, and the motives for this, is what is in focus. As we have seen, there are a couple of explicit mentions of possible Chinese motives, but in most cases this is voiced by the writing journalist. In terms of the kinds of motives mentioned, we see that economic motives are predominant.

## Representation of China and Sweden in the Reports

In the material we find no article giving a close or extensive description of the Chinese pavilion or the Chinese program of the Expo. The theme of the Expo is mentioned, *Better city – Better life*, but this stands as a very general descriptor, mainly developed when it comes to the Swedish participation. Two articles published before the Expo opened put the Expo in its social context. In *Svenska Dagbladet* the context is business and how Shanghai and China are opening up towards the rest of the world.<sup>15</sup> Here the Expo is framed from the perspective of global economy. In *Dagens Nyheter* a feature article focuses on Shanghai, containing interviews with people from Shanghai that contextualise the event. In this article the Expo is framed “from the man-in-the-street” and the everyday life of Shanghai. One of the morning papers also reports from the first week of the Expo, presenting seven images from the Expo. Three of these seven pictures are connected to the Chinese presentation – the opening ceremony, the Chinese pavilion and the Chinese minorities’ participation in the Expo.<sup>16</sup>

Two articles in the material put the event in a critical context. The first is about the Swedish government delegation coming to China and what kind of critique and discussion they will be able to voice.<sup>17</sup> “Swedish tigers don’t talk in China” is the headline of this article,<sup>18</sup> in which a comparison is made with the 2008 Olympics and the international critique concerning human rights in China. The article claims that there is a growing self-censorship among researchers and writers in the West. A point is also made in the article that all the material exhibited in the Swedish pavilion has been monitored and approved by Chinese arrangers. The second article, focusing on the conflict about Chinese politics, deals with the Chinese reaction to Liu Xiaobo being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. This took place in the same week as the Crown Princess of Sweden, Victoria, and Prince Daniel made a visit to China and the Expo.<sup>19</sup> A diplomatic crisis developed and the public diplomacy of the Expo was put to test. The Swedish royalties are not supposed to give their opinion in cases like this; the politicians and diplomats should, but the Swedish press put them under pressure to react publicly. Instead of only focusing on the Crown Princess’s visit to the Expo and China, a parallel story about human rights in China developed in the Swedish media. This was also reported on a daily basis for five days in the evening paper *Expressen*. Its competitor, *Aftonbladet*, had the political angle on the first day but abandoned it for an angle focusing on royalty, fashion, and business opportunities, neglecting the link to the controversy around Liu Xiaobo.

Most of the articles analysed are news items and therefore of a more factual character. Besides one letter to the editor published in *Expressen*, we find views represented in columns, especially in *Svenska Dagbladet*. In three columns the author reflects over the Expo, calling it “a gigantic Chinese ego boost”<sup>20</sup> and claiming that the event does not have popular support and is being staged for the new leadership to show its power to the world and the citizens.

Since so many of the texts deal with the Swedish participation, we will also give a brief overview of how Sweden was represented in the articles. The theme of the Swedish program was “The spirit of innovation,” linking this to issues of social welfare and sustainability. This theme was spelled out in several articles before the Expo opened. One article gave a full overview of how the Swedish pavilion would

be used, room by room.<sup>21</sup> During the Expo, parts of the Swedish program were reported back, in connection with visits from Swedish government representatives and royalties. Reading the morning papers, you get a rough, but more or less complete, image of how the Swedish participation was planned and conducted. That kind of overview, however, does not exist for the Chinese program or pavilion.

The only other country, besides China and Sweden, given special attention by the dailies was Denmark. The use of the *Little Mermaid* and the move from Copenhagen to Shanghai was covered by all the dailies. The Danish pavilion was also mentioned in several of the articles before and during the Expo. There was also a short summary of the Danish campaign published in one of the dailies.<sup>22</sup> The success story of Expo 2010 seems to have been the Danish decision to move the *Little Mermaid* from Copenhagen to Shanghai for the Expo. All four dailies cover that story, but in a brief and humorous way. Short texts about the Norwegian and Finish participation are also represented in the material, showing that the proximity of the Nordic countries seems to matter when deciding what to publish about the event.

### The Outcomes of the Exhibition Reported – for Chinese and Swedish Interests?

A columnist in *Aftonbladet* claims that international exhibitions have left permanent traces in the arranging city, and that also applies to Shanghai. The construction of new highways, tunnels, bridges and the huge underground system with 140 stations is such a visible trace of the Expo, remaining in Shanghai and China after the event.<sup>23</sup> The Chinese pavilion was the biggest building in the Expo area, and it will also be kept on the site. In a news article written on the first days of the Expo, a Chinese researcher claims that the pavilion will be forgotten in a couple of years and expresses another wish: he wants the expo to be remembered for giving Shanghai a theory of sustainable development for the next generation, with the insight that “we must use less energy and start using bikes again, not taking the car to work.”<sup>24</sup> In the same article a person from Shanghai says that he is impressed by the Expo: “it shows the strength of China as a nation.”

The Swedish pavilion hoped to attract a huge number of visitors, making Sweden visible and developing relations with China. According to the Swedish arrangers this was also achieved; around 3 million visitors came to the pavilion.<sup>25</sup>

### The World Exhibition as a Cultural Form of Communication

The world expo is a meeting place and a place for communication across borders of different kinds. In the preceding questions we have studied how arranging countries and participating countries plan and perform the event. An expo can also be thematised (a) as a destination for tourists (b) as an event to organise and govern and (c) as a cultural form to learn from and reflect over.

Three of the dailies published articles about the Expo in their travel sections. In *Aftonbladet* the focus was on Shanghai and the Expo was just used as the temporary reason for visiting Shanghai. One of the main reasons for going there is to shop cheaply, also expressed in the headline “Shop yourself all the way to hot Shanghai.” This very positive article ends by stating that “In this cool, futuristic city of Shanghai it is fun to be a visitor.” In *Svenska Dagbladet* the travel piece is a presentation and review of some of the most important pavilions on the site. The

focus here is entirely on the Expo.<sup>26</sup> *Dagens Nyheter* makes use of one Swedish visitor who shares his experiences from the Expo with the readers. “I liked the exhibition, but I thought I would have time to see more. I wish I could have spent a week there,” the visitor says in the article.<sup>27</sup>

A second approach to the expo phenomenon is to focus on the arrangement and how it is organised. In the material studied there is only basic information on the Expo 2010 organisations, most often used as background material in a very short, factual text. In a few articles there are references to the project and how it has been carried out. In the four dailies there were no article presenting the work of BIE, Bureau International des Expositions. Their work and role are evidently not newsworthy in the Swedish press.

The history of the international exhibition is addressed in three texts – among all the 119. Only one of these texts was classified as a major text.<sup>28</sup> In a short column the architecture of the expos is commented upon<sup>29</sup> and another short column presents personal experiences of going to expos. The amount and the depth of reflection linked to the world expo as a cultural form is indeed limited in the four main Swedish national dailies.

## Implications for Chinese Public Diplomacy, Nation Branding and Soft Power

Four conclusions can be drawn from the study. First, reporting on Expo 2010 was on a low level, when compared to other major global events like the Olympics. Covering the Expo was a much smaller story than covering the Olympics. However, the morning dailies did report on all three phases (before, during and after) and thus gave a general representation of Expo 2010. The tabloids mainly reported during the event. Second, the focus in the publicity was on Sweden and Swedish interests and it was framed using a Swedish perspective on China. Neither the Chinese pavilion nor the Chinese program for the Expo was presented in the media studied. Reasons for arranging the Expo are mentioned but not dealt with in depth or at length. More detailed and extensive descriptions of the Swedish pavilion and parts of the Swedish program were found. It is also when Swedish visitors, celebrities, the king and members of the royal family come to China, Shanghai and the Expo that the dailies report, especially the tabloids. The reports from the tabloids are also given a popular character by focusing on the looks, feelings or plans of the royalties. Third, China and the image of China were weakly represented in the articles. Most of the articles also use an uncritical and non-confrontational way of representing the event. Only two of the major articles had a critical view on the event. Reporting the Expo seems to be linked to a non-confrontational way of reporting and editing. Fourth, almost no reporting addressed issues pertaining to the cultural form of the international expo. What the expo form stands for, its history or its future were not on the agenda for the Swedish dailies.

Following these conclusion, what kind of impact can be expected on Chinese public diplomacy and nation branding? In terms of nation branding, neither Expo 2010 nor China was fully presented in the dailies. When partially presented, they emerged as an economic wonder and a cheap shopping paradise. In terms of public diplomacy the event was framed as a case of Swedish, not Chinese, public diplomacy. This is also underscored by the way the Swedish project at Expo 2010 was

designed and performed. There was never any intention to reach a Swedish target audience; instead, it chose to focus on target groups at the Expo and target groups in China using the Internet and Chinese media publicity (SOU 2011, Appendix 7 and 9). Nevertheless, 700 articles were written in the Swedish press, 119 of which are analysed in this study (SOU 2011, 171-172). Here we see journalistic norms at work, framing and telling the story from a domestic perspective – about Sweden to Swedes. All this suggests that Expo 2010, as used by Sweden and represented by the main Swedish dailies, did not contribute so much to a Chinese “going out” strategy as to a World “going in” strategy.

Finally, the question about the use of the international exhibition will be addressed. In an analysis of Expo 2010 Björner and Berg (2012) argue that it offered a space for developing “practices of communification” where community building takes place under exceptional circumstances, creating unique experiences, and for that reason it has a potential for building strong business relations. They also point out that the expo event seems to be a well-suited platform for business and companies to make use of in the coming years. The international exhibition is a kind of event where interaction and communication create unique common experiences, laying the ground for future contacts and cooperation. What is striking in this conclusion is that Expo 2010 was not only the scene for enacting or screen for projecting media dreams of the future – mechanical, analogue or digital. What was essential for the Swedish participation was also the importance that VIP guests were given (Björner and Berg 2012, 42). The exclusive and personal meeting at a unique event is at the heart of this co-ordinated creation of community, in business, politics and other areas. Using the international exhibition in this way can be interpreted as a de-mediation of new media and digital media forms. The use of the Internet, social media and digital communication technology becomes de-mediated by the situated meetings, offering a body of actions and events to attach to the future play of mediated sign and meaning. Instead of focusing on representation and meaning, the use of the exhibition form turns towards action and coordinated action. The tracks of our actions come to define the future direction of our common acts.

Chinese soft power lies in the possibility to develop common tracks of and directions for action and to make them significant nodes of meaning. Expo 2010 attracted 73 million visitors and made history as the most visited expo ever. It attracted a huge business interest from Sweden, but it must be doubted if this stands for a general “communification” of the relations between Sweden and China, Swedes and Chinese. Beyond the communities of business awaits the establishment of communities of the common people or of the multitude of the publics of China, Sweden and the World.

## Notes:

1. <http://www.bie-paris.org>.
2. *Göteborgs-Posten*, GP, with a circulation of 228,200 copies is bigger than *Svenska Dagbladet*, but since GP has a regional profile it was not used in this study.
3. *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen* are called “evening papers” (kvällstidningar) in Swedish, even though they are printed and distributed the same morning or during the day. The “morning papers” are printed in the evening and distributed during the night/morning to subscribers. Both kinds of dailies are for sale in shops and kiosks during the day.

4. Retriever gives access to *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Aftonbladet* and Presstext give access to *Dagens Nyheter* and *Expressen*.
5. The search used the Swedish search string "världsutställning\*."
6. See for instance Sparks, Colin. 2010. Coverage of China in the UK national press, *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 3, 3, 347-365. Of interest is also the 2011 special number on media coverage of China, *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 4, 3, 251-364.
7. *Svenska Dagbladet* 100522, En svensk tiger i Kina.
8. *Dagens Nyheter* 100430, Shanghai ställer ut för världen.
9. *Aftonbladet* 101031, Hermans historia. Albert Einstein – bland de första på Liseberg.
10. *Svenska Dagbladet* 100107, Blågula idéer i Shanghai; *Dagens Nyheter* 100430, Shanghai ställer ut för hela världen.
11. *Dagens Nyheter*, 100412, Sverige satsar för att synas i Shanghai.
12. *Expressen* 100430, Vi kan göra Kina till ett bättre land.
13. *Expressen* 100521, Maud: Kungen är fantastisk. Näringsminister om affärsbesöket i Kina.
14. *Aftonbladet* 100524, Ska få pippi på Sverige.
15. *Svenska Dagbladet* 100410, Shanghai öppnar sig för världen.
16. *Svenska Dagbladet* 100505, Gigantisk utställning invigd i Kina.
17. *Svenska Dagbladet* 100522, En svensk tiger i Kina.
18. This caption contains a play of words where "tiger" in Swedish means both the animal and keeping quiet/not disclosing secrets.
19. *Svenska Dagbladet* 101012, Politik inte tabu under Kinareisan.
20. *Svenska Dagbladet* 100427, Expon en gigantisk kinesisk egotripp.
21. *Dagens Nyheter* 100205, Pippi ska sälja Sverige på världsutställningen.
22. *Expressen* 101121, Jungfruresan över. Den Lille Havfrue hemma efter sagoäventyret i Kina.
23. *Aftonbladet* 101031, Hermans historia. Albert Einstein – bland de första på Liseberg.
24. *Dagens Nyheter* 100430 Shanghai ställer ut för hela världen.
25. *Dagens Nyheter* 101029, Svenska paviljongen lockade tre miljoner.
26. *Svenska Dagbladet* 100905, Största utställningen i världen.
27. *Dagens Nyheter* 100801, Hela världen i Shanghai.
28. *Aftonbladet* 101031, Hermans historia – Albert Einstein – bland de första på Liseberg.
29. *Aftonbladet* 100214, Shanghajad till propagandaspåret.
30. <<http://www.ts.se/Pdf/Upplagestatistik/TS-upplage-och-rackviddsutveckling-2010.pdf>>

## References:

- Allwood, John, Ted Allan, and Patrick Reid. 2001. *The Great Exhibitions: 150 years*. Rev. ed. London: Exhibition Consultants.
- Anholt, Simon. 2007. *Competitive Identity: The Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- BIE. 2012. Official Site of the Bureau International des Expositions. <<http://www.bie-paris.org>>
- Björner, Emma and Per Olof Berg. 2012. Strategic Creation of Experiences at Shanghai World Expo: A Practice of Communication. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management* 3, 1, 30-45.

- Brownell, Susan. 2013. "Brand China" in the Olympic Context: Communications Challenges of China's Soft Power Initiative. *Javnost – The Public* 20, 4, 65-82.
- Cull, Nicholas J. 2008. Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, 31-54.
- Findling, John E. and Kimberly D. Pelle, eds. 1990. *Historical Dictionary of World's Fairs and Expositions, 1851-1988*. New York: Greenwood.
- Greenhalgh, Paul. 1988. *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Nye, David E. 1994. *American Technological Sublime*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Nye, Joseph S. 2008. Public Diplomacy and Soft Power. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, 94-109.
- Official Website of Expo. 2010. <<http://en.expo2010.cn/>>
- Pamment, James. 2011. *The Limits of the New Public Diplomacy: Strategic Communication and Evaluation at the U.S. State Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, British Council, Swedish Foreign Ministry and Swedish Institute*. PhD Diss. Stockholm: Stockholms universitet.
- Quing, Luo and Giuseppe Richeri, eds. 2010. Encoding the Olympics – The Beijing Olympic Games and Communication Impact Worldwide. *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 27, 9-10, 1405-1875.
- Rydell, Robert W. 1984. *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Snow, Nancy and Philip M. Taylor, eds. 2009. *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*. New York: Routledge.
- Snow, Nancy. 2010. Public Diplomacy: New Dimensions and Implications. In T. L. McPhail (ed.), *Global Communication: Theories, Stakeholders, and Trends*, 3rd ed., 84-102. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- SOU, Sveriges Offentliga utredningar. 2011. *Spirit of Innovation: Slutrapport*. Stockholm: Fritze. <[http://www.expo2010.se/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/SOU\\_Spirit\\_of\\_innovation\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.expo2010.se/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/SOU_Spirit_of_innovation_FINAL.pdf)>
- Swedish Website of Expo 2010. <<http://www.expo2010.se/en/>>
- Zhao, Yuezhi. 2013. China's Quest for "Soft Power": Imperatives, Impediments and Irreconcilable Tensions? *Javnost – The Public* 20, 4, 17-30.

Primary sources:

- Aftonbladet (AB)* 1/1 2010-31/12 2010, 19 articles.
- Dagens Nyheter (DN)* 1/1 2010-31/12 2010, 31 articles.
- Expressen (Exp)* 1/1 2010-31/12 2010, 24 articles.
- Svenska Dagbladet (SvD)* 1/1 2010-31/12 2010, 45 articles.