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‘The Ten Thousand Things’: Adaptation, Innovation and Creativity in China

In the traditional Chinese worldview *wanwu* (万物) referred to ‘the ten thousand things’. Accordingly, change occurred through a process of efficacious configurations. New cultural models continually emerged as persons of qualified learning personalized formal practices, commented on texts and produced variations. This paper will show how a traditional perspective on innovation sheds light on current day phenomena. In today’s world, information and communication technologies provide opportunities for ever-increasing configurations. As the ethos of ‘recombination’ and ‘reassembling’ spreads globally, the ‘ten thousand things’ take on new configurations, new interpretations and new uses. The paper re-theorizes a Chinese innovation system model, focusing on how ideas, technologies and creative works are generated, transformed and disseminated and how these processes are a result of (1) changes in national and regional cultural/ creative industries policy; (2) The role of local knowledge, social networks and entrepreneurs in responding to changes; and (3) The creative use of information and communication technologies by user communities.