CREATING CONNECTIONS: CHINA IN AFRICA

China’s presence in sub-Saharan Africa is increasing and it is changing things. Trying to understand these changes, particularly the role of Chinese organisations and how they work in sub-Saharan Africa, is the basis for the China in Africa project – an international research project directed by Professor Lynette Louw of the Management Department at Rhodes University.

According to Prof Louw, in 2014 China’s investment in Africa exceeded US$30 billion and trade surpassed US$220 billion. Since the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) 15 years ago, constructive dialogue and cooperation between China and African countries has been enhanced. Prof Louw says most of the research in Africa focuses on the macro and micro levels with little research on and collective knowledge of the management of organisations and relationships with their stakeholders at the meso level.

Recently, five leading universities in South Africa signed an agreement, awaiting the signing of a further agreement with five leading universities in the People’s Republic of China (PRC), which aims to establish a China South Africa Higher Education Consortium (CSAHEC). “Potentially the CSAHEC collaboration will lead to the further sustainability of Chinese organisations in the sub-Saharan Africa project as well as enhancing access to Chinese organisations,” says Prof Louw.

“Systematic research by international management scholars is required to better understand the dynamics and synergies of the presence of these organisations in sub-Saharan Africa. [Enhancing cross cultural understanding is needed] so that Chinese organisations in sub-Saharan Africa can be more effective and have appropriate business models and forms of management practices,” she added.