Studying abroad leads me to wonder whether Western European people have the same cultural shocks as I, when they working in Chinese context. The topic about “improvement of team performance between Western architectural firms and Chinese developers” is studied. Lab of Collaboration and integration team is connected project team with cross-cultural management.

Currently there are many internationally architectural projects happening in China. However, many international projects are not satisfied as designers’ desire or public expectation. The most important reason is the existence of cultural differences such as language barriers, tacit norms and lack of cultural intelligence. This causes conflicts which lead to frustration in the diverse team. As a result, failure of the project can be foreseen. Thus helping cross-cultural team performance efficiently is an emerging problem to be solved.

Based on team performance framework on team level (figure 1), the conceptual model (figure 2) is developed to prove whether the framework works in Chinese context or not. This study conducted the face-to-face interview and involved probing questions. In-depth answers and particular aspects of the response will be dig in. 4 main cases were studied to see how different organizational structures work in Chinese context and whether some cultural tacit norms influenced on team performance. 2 other cases were also studied for understanding Chinese working method better.

Figure 1: The theoretical model of examination psychological safety at team level (Source: A. Edmondson & Lei, 2014).
The vision of this research is to figure out the main problems in collaborative teams working in Chinese context and help them to boost team performance by generating some recommendations. The final result will be provided to Western European architectural firms to help them understand Chinese context and establish long-term relationship with Chinese market. Interviews reflect many differences from Edmondson's framework. The framework in Chinese context is showed in below (Figure 3).
In Edmondson’s framework, it shows that psychological safety is very important in the team, however, from this research it found that psychological safety is less important in Chinese context. Since hierarchy plays a main role in Chinese context, the architect cannot speak out during the meeting. It is like a tacit norm that people notice it by their experience and then choose to speak out or not by different situation. The experience that mentioned helps to understand Chinese context more, which related to cultural intelligence (CQ). When people understand Chinese context more, they notice do’s and don’t’s in different situations. Besides, Guan-xi is important for Chinese to build relationship and trust. If you have good Guan-xi, the developer will come to the company again, because they have good collaborative working experience and he trusts the company. It is noticed that Chinese people work more flexible and they don't follow the contract strictly, thus the team performance is not like Western’s. Flexibility is bit more important than efficiency.

It is showed that the framework of Chinese team performance is different than Western’s. This should take cultural differences, hierarchy (power distance) and uncertainty avoidance, in to account. And it is important for foreign architectural firms to learn how to work flexible in Chinese context.