



## Min Li, China

**From Megalopolis to Small-town Blues in Germany's South**

**Master of Engineering - Environmental Studies,  
Nürtingen-Geislingen University,  
<http://www.english.hfwu.de/uw>**

**Something was missing in the beginning, but today she enjoys the calmness. Chinese student Min Li dared something that is hard to understand on first sight. As a typical Shanghainese girl she came up with the plan to study at Nürtingen. Quite a change from the urban Mega-centre at the Yangtse-delta to the small town at the Neckar river in Germany's South-West.**

The young Chinese followed a targeted approach in her planning for a career. As a graduate in German studies in Shanghai she began working for three years in distribution for German enterprises in China. But she wanted more. She wanted to enter a postgraduate program to improve her professional qualification. "When it comes to the theoretical contents you can study everything in China – no problem, but if you look for methods how to apply your knowledge, studying in Germany does help a lot". Her expectations did not remain unfulfilled. Meanwhile Min Li graduated as a Masters of Engineering and works as an intern at the nearby Daimler-Chrysler plant. The Masters program "Environmental Studies" is offered by four universities in the region of Stuttgart, the capital of the State of Baden-Württemberg, under the guidance of Nürtingen-Geislingen University.

A huge emphasis is put on a very applied approach in teaching. Min Li was attracted by a learning environment that is based on working in projects, groups and teamwork. Starting at the first day, Min Li had to work together with other students at certain projects – like water pollution control. It is common for the students to leave the classroom. To work on site at the rivers. They had to work out solutions as a group and present the results at the end of each semester. They were required to work as a team at a specific project. "It was crucial to develop structural thinking, every student knew that his contribution would be part of the final project report". Until then this applied approach to academics was totally unknown to Min Li from her former Chinese university experience. And now, just after graduation Min Li is exposed to the same spirit in her current job: "At German companies you have to work in teams. Problem solving in Germany requires individual ideas that will be put together to come up with a solution. And the teams are usually international no matter if you are at the university or in a company. In that respect Chinese students can learn a lot from the Germans".

During her program in Environmental Studies Min Li met students from various engineering disciplines: Automotive, Mechanical Engineering and others. Now, as an engineer she knows exactly how to adopt modern production technology to environmental needs. The curriculum of the Environmental Studies Masters program has convinced her, especially the cooperation of four universities involved. When Min Li decided to go abroad one aspect made the difference: Academic quality. Germany has a worldwide reputation in Engineering. And when it comes to studying in Germany the universities in the State of Baden-Württemberg are always ranked Top 10. And since Min Li was looking for Environmental Studies the road to Nürtingen was not far.

Locates in the greater Stuttgart region Nürtingen with its 40 000 citizens might appear to breathe the air of the province. Well, it does, but still: The city belongs to the heart of Europe's strongest technology and business region. When it comes to foreign trade the region around Stuttgart outnumbers the exports rates like a whole European country like Spain. Min Li meanwhile got used to the small southern German city for long. The language was not easy, the local accent is tough to understand even for someone with a degree in German studies. And, coming from 15 Million citizens Shanghai she could hardly believe that shops close down at night and during the weekend. "At home it is quite common that everybody works at Sundays. Here in Germany my German colleagues spend their weekends with their family, go hiking or go out in the nature. It took some time but now Min Li enjoys the easy atmosphere. "The old city centre of Nürtingen is just charming. The environment is phantastic and the location at the river is magnificent. And the people are friendly and warm-hearted". They might appear a bit conservative in the eyes of the urban Chinese girl. And the people look for the buck. No problem for Min Li: "In that respect they are quite similar to the people from Shanghai". Min Li will stay for another couple of months in South Germany. One day she will return to Shanghai to look for a job. But she definitely will not live in the city: "I will look for an apartment outside of town, where it is not so loud". The time in Small-town Germany has left its imprint.

Source: Nürtingen-Geislingen University (Gerhard Schmücker)

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Baden-Württemberg

The German Southwest.