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Shanghai Modern: The Future in Microcosm?

Edited by
Justin O'Connor and Xin Gu

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Culture Unbound
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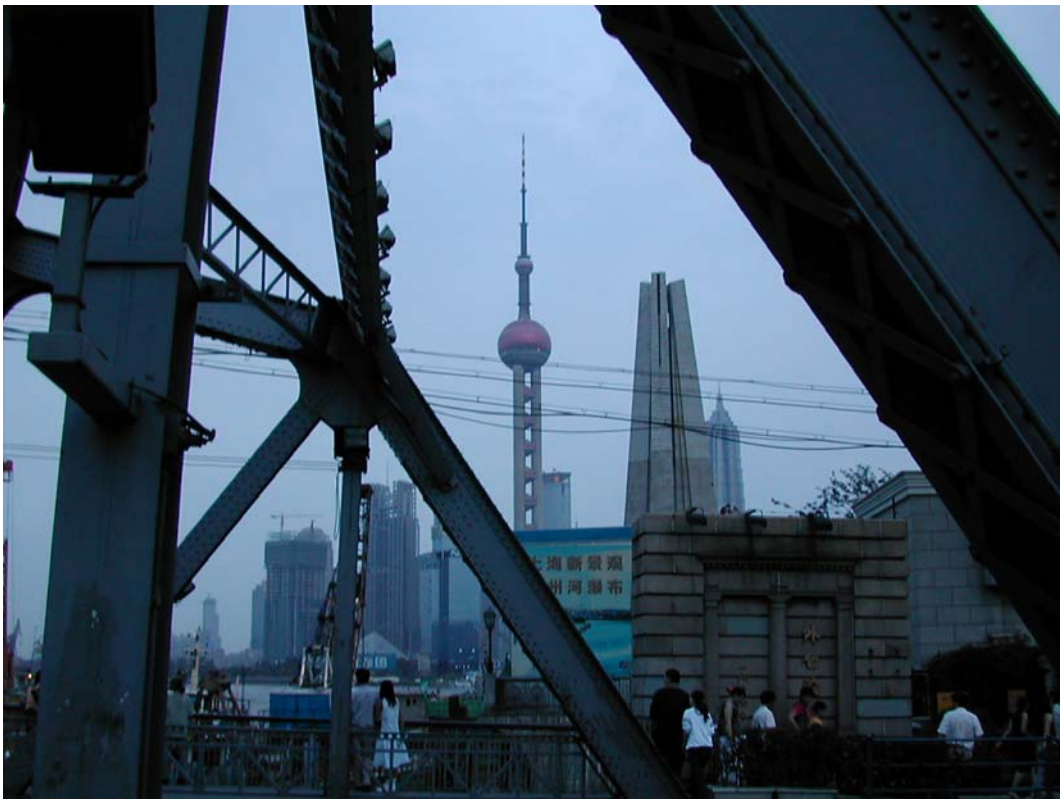
Introducing Shanghai Modern: The Future in Microcosm?

Edited by Justin O'Connor & Xin Gu



When an awestruck Paris Hilton looked out over Shanghai's Pudong district in 2007 and said it looked 'like the future' she was not only airing a contemporary cliché but connecting with a longer history of the city as powerhouse of China's modernity. Shanghai is where modernity – the word, the concept, the reality - made landfall in China in the mid-19th century. By the 1940s it was a city comparable with any of the world's major metropolitan centres. Punished in consequence by the People's Republic after 1949, it remained China's industrial and sometimes political powerhouse - even if its culture, along with its built environment, remained preserved in the amber of neglect and poverty. Missing out on the first wave of Deng's reforms in the 1980s, Shanghai finally took off in the early 1990s with a speed and a skill that suggested long buried resources of entrepreneurial vision and global connections.

The city has been happy to trade on its glamorous global past as it made its way to becoming China's commercial capital, and its citizens constantly proclaim it to be the nation's 'most western city'. But what is the reality of this powerful narra-

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tive? The city certainly has its fair share – and more – of the social costs of the global city: social and spatial fragmentation, poverty and displacement, the juxtaposition of the super-rich and the poor who service them. It is also surprisingly culturally cautious, with the avant-garde in 'art' and 'popular culture' located in 'conservative' Beijing. And its economy is driven more than in any other city by large state-owned enterprises belying its image as a free market entrepreneurial nirvana. It's a party town, but not in the way Ms. Hilton might understand this.

The papers collected in this volume represent a range of different reflections on Shanghai past and present. Justin O'Connor's article acts as introduction to the theme of *Shanghai Modern*, reviewing the way in which this has been used to construct a new historical narrative for Shanghai and China. It suggests that the opposition between revolutionary 'closure' and cosmopilitan openness is not so simple and hides many other oppositions which we might want to examine more closely.

Immediately after this introductory article we share Owen Hatherley's "first encounter" with Shanghai (and China) and the challenges it presents to Western notions of modernity and the urban future. Organised as a series of walks this high speed *flaneurie* produces observational fragments and speculative reflections on the modern city which complement the author's recent 2010 book *A Walk through the New ruins of Great Britain* (London: Verso).

Anna Greenspan is another western observer but also a long time resident of Shanghai. She takes us past first encounters to reflect not just on the nature of contemporary Shanghai but also on those notions of surface and depth in which such questions are inevitably caught. Many of the judgments of outsiders, she argues, trying to peek behind the curtain, misrecognise the role of appearance in traditional Chinese culture and which are still very much with us.

Hongwei Bao follows with a particular take on the question of cosmopolitanism, of insiders and outsiders, through a case study of queer spaces in Shanghai. In so doing he problematises the idea that gay spaces are an index of cosmopolitanism, or than that cosmopolitanism is necessarily equitable and tolerant.

Ma Ran and Lu Pan present us with case studies of official Shanghai memories, in the form of the Shanghai International film festival and the preservation of historical monuments in the city. Both testify to Abbas' view that such memories are "select and fissured, sometimes indistinguishable from amnesia".

Xin Gu and Sheng Zhong are concerned with the development of creative industries as a central to the cultural and economic aspirations of the new Shanghai. In particular they look at those "creative clusters" which combine theories of clustering and culture-led urban regeneration in an attempt to kick start a creative economy. Both papers looks at how the historical built infrastructure is being used to engage with a new post-industrial future, and both raise questions about the ways in which this is being undertaken.

Haili Ma gives us an historical account of a form of cultural production mostly excluded from the glitzy world of the creative industries – Yue ju, a distinct form of Chinese opera from Shanghai. A unique development only possible in the autonomous urban milieu of the city, it used women-only performers to provide a new kind of entertainment suitable to the new urban consumer of Shanghai. After

being adopted by the Communist party and promoted after 1949 it has been severly challenged by the cutting of subsidy in the post-reform period. Haili charts the contradictions of a city promoting the form as a new elite entertainment when its audience is aging and lacks money, and the youthful experiments that might renew it are pushed to the margins.

Finally, Ian Fong Ho Yin takes us through a close reading of Wang Anyi's 1996 novel *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*. It serves perhaps to close the various reflections on Shanghai Modern that began with the introduction by asking whether Shanghai past can any longer be of use to its future or if not lost, then the nostalgic trap it became for the heroine of that novel.

Justin O'Connor is capacity building professor in the Creative Industries Faculty of Queensland University of Technology and visiting chair in the Department of humanities, Shanghai Jiaotong University. Previously Justin was professor of cultural industries at the University of Leeds and director of Manchester Metropolitan University's Institute for Popular Culture. He is currently working with Xin Gu on an Australian Research Council project on creative clusters in China, in partnership with Arup, Sydney, Shanghai Jiaotong University and Creative 100, Qingdao. E-mail: justin.oconnor@qut.edu.au

Dr Xin Gu is Research Associate based at Queensland University of Technology, Australia. Currently she is working on an Australian Research Council Linkage project - 'designing creative clusters in China'. She is an urban sociologist, originally from China. Her research focuses on cultural industries and urban regeneration in Chinese cities. E-mail: X1.gu@qut.edu.au

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Shanghai Modern: Replaying Futures Past

By Justin O'Connor

Abstract

This article discusses different accounts of *Shanghai Modern*, the period between 1920s and 1940s in which the city occupied a unique position within China and the world. It places discussions of this period in the context of the resurgence of urban led modernization in China, led by Shanghai. It looks in particular at Leo Ou-Fan Lee's attempt to link the cosmopolitanism of Shanghai modern with prospects for this new post-reform China. I then discuss Ackbas Abbas' response to this book and use this as a way of reflecting on the progress of Shanghai urban development and its divergence/ convergence with similar processes in the West. The article then looks at the other significant moment of the Cultural Revolution as a way of opening up discussions of Chinese and Shanghainese modernity beyond that of simply an absorption into Western capitalist modernity. It concludes by briefly introducing this volume.

Keywords: Shanghai; modernity; modernism; urban development; Post-reform China.

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I

> *When Shanghai fell in 1949 to the Chinese communists a door was shut. During the cultural revolution the door was bolted for good. A world had gone…[C]ommunism has fallen on the city like a sandstorm, burying and preserving…. Communism has mummified Shanghai's appearance in a manner inconceivable to a Westerner. Shopping centres, over-passes and subways are all missing. So, despite carefully preserved wrappings, is Shanghai's spirit. … To write about a spiritually dead city presents difficulties.* (Sergeant, Shanghai, 1991: 5-6)

> *After years of stagnation, the great metropolis of SHANGHAI is undergoing one of the fastest economic expansions the world has ever seen. The skyline is filling with skyscrapers; there are three thousand now, more than New York, and another two thousand are coming soon. Gleaming shopping malls, luxurious hotels and prestigious arts centres are rising alongside. Shanghai's 21 million residents enjoy the highest incomes on the mainland, and there's plenty for them to splash out on; witness the rash of celebrity restaurants and designer flagship stores. In short, it's a city with a swagger, bursting with nouveau riche exuberance and élan.* (Rough Guide on-line 2011)

On the surface these two quotes stage a fairly straight-forward narrative of a progression from Communist stagnation, closure to the world, and spiritual death to growth, openness and the recovery of exuberance and *élan.* It is a narrative that has set the tone for many western commentators who began to take an increasing interest in China generally from the mid-1990s, accelerating rapidly after the turn of the millennium. In the 1990s it was South China that drew western attention; in Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta an energetic entrepreneurialism reminiscent of early industrial Manchester was transforming the landscape of communist state-owned enterprises into a new "workshop of the world", red in tooth and claw. In the post-1989 world this *Manchesterismus* could only be welcome, and much more so than the gangster capitalism that was emerging in the various fragments of the Soviet Union.

But already for observers on the ground, the transformation was becoming more than a return to the capitalist fold. This was not primarily a question of whether China's capitalism was a "real" capitalism, or when (if at all) it would develop liberal democratic political forms. It was the speed and scale of its urban transformation that was somehow shocking, even monstrous. Through books such as Rem Koolhaas' *The Great Leap Forward* – which built on his other Harvard-Based projects of the later 1990s such as *S,M,L,XL* – western readers encountered not just a re-run of western urban modernisation but some new kind of city-region, on a scale which urban planners in the west could scarcely conceive. Heroic modernism, demonised in the West since the early 1970s, had in many ways already migrated to Asian cities through the work of "starchitects" Norman Foster, Rienzo Piano and Richard Rogers (Foster 2010). The radical vision of a revived (or indeed, "retroactive") modernism articulated by Koolhaas in *Delirious New York* (1974) now seemed more at home in Asia, and especially China, than in Manhattan (see Owen Hatherley in this volume).

New visitors to China from the late 1990s onwards experienced a first encounter with a new kind of future. For those who read the numbers properly – and in the boom years of the 1990s there were few who could see past the liberal democratic *End of History* – it was clear that if China's growth continued in this way then this could not be simply a quirky regional variety of capitalist modernization. However its development turned out its sheer mass was going to have profound consequences on every global indicator you could care to mention – from economic to environmental to geo-political.

Fukuyama's now notorious *The End of History* (1992) proclaimed the ultimate triumph of capitalist liberal democracy at the same time as it suggested that the future could only be more of the same. It coincided with Frederick Jameson's "postmodern moment", in which the horizon of global capitalism stretched out in all directions, obliterating the idea of a different future and indeed temporality as such (Jameson 1991). Commentators constantly invoked Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner* to describe the neon-lit skyline of the new Asian cities; but this dystopian, futureless urban future, with its synthesized, manipulated individual and collective pasts (visible in the *retro-noir* form itself) is clearly Los Angeles. The comparison misses what Chinese cities of the 1990s exuded: an optimistic future of growth, technology and general material improvement long since abandoned in the West. Visitors encountered a kind of modernization process which our "post-materialism" had seemingly surpassed and they found a charge of energy and optimism – even libido – which could only bring on nostalgia for the West's earlier naïve belief in progress; that the future could only get better.

Fukuyama's title refers to Hegel's lectures on world history in the later 1820s. These have been taken as a definitive moment when Asia – despotic, luxurious, cruel, vital, vast – was consigned to a pre-modern past. Whereas in the late 18th century Great Britain could conceive of Imperial China on equal terms (not reciprocated), a decade after Hegel's lectures a few gun boats brought the archaic empire to heel. Underneath the dominant narrative of China – finally acknowledging its communist dead-end and launching a rapid catch-up that must inevitably lead to its normalization – another version of this re-run could be discerned. For those with eyes to see, the future first encountered in South China was monstrous – and intoxicating – not just because of its outsized re-run of naïve promethean modernization; here the future was just beginning and it was no longer necessarily ours. Fukiyama's end of history moment paradoxically marked the definitive passage of Hegel's West into the past.

II

Shenzhen, the *wunderkind* of Chinese modernization, was a village-cum-workshop-of-the-world. The green light given to Shanghai's development in 1992 by Deng Xiaoping irrecoverably changed the dynamics of urban development in

China. Shanghai had been an economic powerhouse throughout the Communist era but having to donate 80 percent of its income to the national government meant its urban infrastructure received very little investment. Hence the state of the city described by Hilary Sergeant above as "mummified". Reviving this mummy, as in the Hollywood films, was always going to be an uncertain process. The scenario outlined above is one where Shanghai would pick up where it left off in the 1930s. The entrepreneurial spirit and economic know-how of the city, its connections with oversees Chinese capital, its established – if dilapidated – urban infrastructure would, now that it was given its chance, propel the city into the forefront of the economic reform process. Which it duly did. Driven forward by the municipal leadership – soon to be national – of Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji Shanghai embarked on that rapid process of urban development which stands as background to the papers in this volume (Chen 2009).

"Picking up where it left off" meant something different for a Chinese Communist Party (CPC) leadership engaged in the post-1978 reform process. This renewed spurt of modernization could never be the repudiation of the revolution to which it was assigned by many western writers. Its initial justification was the rejection, not of Communism, but its ultra-left excesses during the Cultural Revolution. It was a picking up of the debates around the role of the market and foreign trade during the heroic modernization process of the 1950s and early 1960s – but now with the examples of the Asian tigers striding into the distance and in a new, unpredictable context of "globalization". The astonishing development of Pudong begun in the mid-1990s, with its cluster of huge skyscrapers in the "Tomorrow Square" of Lujiazui, was meant as a surpassing of the colonial buildings on The Bund in Puxi. The new Shanghai would no longer be in the shadow of its imperialist capitalist past; the earlier phase of modernization which had built the city into "the Paris (or New York) of the East" would be dwarfed by new forces propelling the shiny metropolis skywards from the rice fields.

Nevertheless, the emergence of Shanghai at the forefront of this modernization opened up some particularly deep and complex fissures in this post-reform narrative. The revival of Shanghai was an acknowledgment of the primary power of urban modernization after thirty years of rural-led development. Shanghai had been the site of the foundation of the CPC and of the early workers struggles against both capitalism and imperialism. After their 1927 suppression in the city by Chiang Kai-shek the main Communist forces had moved to the countryside and eventually, in Mao's famous formulation, "surrounded the cities".

> History has dealt its most ironic coup de grace by making the cities [Hong Kong and Shanghai] important once again as cultural and commercial centers after half a century of rural revolution promoting the triumph of the countryside over the cities. As a century of China's search for modernity comes to an end, the specters that hang over the not too distant horizon are cities such as Shanghai and Hong Kong. (Lee 1999: 339)

This was more than a switch of economic policy – though the consequences of this were to be profound (and deeply mixed) for both urbanites and rural workers. For in the historiography of the People's Republic Shanghai had not just been China's foremost site of modernization but also of its capitalist and imperialist degradation. The liberation of Shanghai in 1949 was presented by the Communists as a victory not just over a key imperialist foothold but a definitive rebuttal of a western capitalist model of modernization and of the urban modernity to which it had given rise. Shanghai represented cosmopolitan decadence and exploitation, a city of workers, prostitutes and beggars lorded over by foreign and Chinese comprador capitalists. The victorious arrival of the ragged, peasant Red Army down the *Huai Hai* road was an act of repudiation and cleansing. The high level of contribution required from Shanghai by the national government was as much punitive as it was necessary; the city was to pay for its sins by financing the modernisation of the rest of China.

Did the return of Shanghai signify more than the return of the market and a renewed emphasis on urban development? Deng Xiaoping's reforms were also based on an "opening up" which many students and intellectuals wished to extend from inward investment and foreign trade to the promise of greater cultural and democratic freedoms. The events of June 4th 1989 put an end to this easy assumption at the national level; but did the re-launch of the reforms in 1992 and the re-emergence of Shanghai signify the resumption of an older urban modernity in which this "openness" might thrive anew?

III

This seems to me the significance of Leo Ou-Fan Lee's influential 1999 book *Shanghai Modern* which attempted to establish a connection between the re-emergence of Shanghai and an older Chinese cosmopolitanism lost in 1949 (though partially preserved in its mirror-city of Hong Kong). Hong Kong is in many ways the lens through which Lee views the emerging Shanghai[1] and indeed his book comes at the end of a decade in which Shanghai's past had been subject of a concerted effort of remembrance in Hong Kong's academic and popular culture alike. In opening up new directions for the future the post-1978 reforms necessarily shifted perspectives on the past; they raised questions of "what if", of paths chosen and paths discarded. Hong Kong (and Taiwan, built on a very different form of exodus) was faced with a re-convergence of paths as 1997 drew close. This was political convergence (with 2042 in the deep background)[2] and also economic, as China's urban commercial-led expansion recalled that of Hong Kong (and Taiwan) since the 1950s. Would Shanghai and Hong Kong represent a cultural convergence, the cosmopolitan culture of the former partially preserved by the latter, and both returning centre stage in a new reformed China?

Lee's book evokes the cosmopolitan world of Shanghai of the 1920s and 1930s which came to an end in the second world war and subsequent civil war. The book builds on and extends an international scholarship – much of it North American – which attempted to unearth this period from the rubble of capitalist and imperialist exploitation under which it had been buried by Communist historiography. In this revised image we have a thriving metropolis providing space for a growing Chinese financial and industrial capital and an emergent urban middle class enjoying material comforts on a par with its counterparts in other great international cities. This ongoing task of Shanghai historical research was an

> archeology of knowledge, a pursuit of a specific type of knowledge acquired through systematic description of rich artifacts and archives otherwise buried or glossed over by standard sociopolitical histories of modern China. (Zhang 1999:4).

This historical work continues, with new books on this period appearing all the time; but retrieving the image of Shanghai was of more than pure historical interest. Clearly some of this revision of "standard" – that is Communist – "sociopolitical histories" in the 1980s and 1990s followed the pattern set by revisionist accounts of the French and Russian revolutions, in which emergent forces of liberalism and capitalism were brutally cut down before they could fully develop. The two quotes at the beginning echo this narrative. But Lee's evocation of Shanghai modernity is much more complex than this.

Lee rejects the simplistic description of those new spaces of modernity – the new buildings, the department stores, the coffee houses, dance halls, public parks, race course, not to mention the public cultural space opened up by publishing, cinemas, recorded music and so on – as colonial, and those who inhabited them as mimicking their western masters. He evokes an "urban cultural sensibility rooted in cosmopolitanism" (339), of openness to the world:

> If cosmopolitanism means an abiding curiosity in "looking out" – locating oneself as cultural mediator at the intersection between China and other parts of the world – then Shanghai in the 1930s was the cosmopolitan city par excellence. (Lee 1999: 315)

The city is a cosmopolitan space in which new forms of a distinctly modern Chinese culture emerge from their encounter with Western and Japanese modernity. Lee argues strongly not just against the accusation of "mimicry" but also those that suggest this cosmopolitanism was superficial and had/ could have little impact against the inertia of traditional culture. Arguing against just such a characterization of the 1930s by Joseph Levenson in 1966, as that writer witnessed the wiping out of "whatever traces of cosmopolitanism still remained in Shanghai" (313), Lee sees the return of Shanghai in the 1990s as a redemption of the cosmopolitan promise of *Shanghai modern*. As we shall see shortly, Ackbar Abbas (2000) was to immediately question the notion of "cosmopolitan"; but I would argue that for Lee cosmopolitanism represented not just a particular "urban cultural sensibility" but a space of historical possibility.

Lee's positive evocation of a bygone *Shanghai modern* certainly related to hopes for the future of post-reform China; but its openness to the world, its role as "cultural mediator", suggested more than simply throwing in its lot with western modernity – either in the 1930s or now. For Shanghai's "urban cultural sensibility" was certainly linked to the material comforts and possibilities brought by western technology and trade, but this "material culture" was negotiated via an artistic and literary modernism. This modernism, itself an import (usually via Japan), was a means by which western modernity could be assimilated to Chinese traditional culture and used to create a new kind of modern Chinese culture. The power of *Shanghai modern*, as I read it in Lee, lies in its opening up of alternative possible modernities between Chinese tradition and colonial imitation. It locates modernism in the wider swirl of ideas which erupted in China in the early 20th century. This modernism is a situated, provisional urban cultural working through of that conundrum outlined in mid-19th century China: "Chinese learning for essence, Western learning for practical use". Unlike Baudelaire's Paris, in which modernity was cultural catastrophe, Shanghai modernism shared more of the 1920s avant-garde enthusiasm for the possibilities of modernity. It was not just a celebration of Mao Dun's "Light, Heat, Power" but an attempt to use these new possibilities of modernity to renew Chinese culture (Mao 1979).

This is much more than a problem for historiography or "archeology". Though these tasks are important, and help us, in the word of Andrew Jones (2001) "complicate" standard historical accounts, there is a tendency to construct *Shanghai modern* as a lost antique world in a way akin to Benjamin's notion of historicism – the past "as it really was". In contrast Benjamin's practice sought to reconstruct the epoch for its contemporary relevance, "in order to blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history" (Benjamin 1969: 263). This was the *Jetztzeit* or "now-time" in which past connects to the present. Lee's discussion of the emergence of popular cultural nostalgia for old Shanghai in the 1980s relates to this. Faced with the reversion to mainland China in 1997 Hong Kong – which had abandoned itself to money making (very successfully) – became conscious of itself in the mirror of a past Shanghai. Shanghai provided a form of historical memory in a city which most saw as having abandoned this:

> Nostalgia in this case has gone beyond pastiche and parody to offer a historical allegory: if the past no longer exists – a common metaphor for a place such as Hong Kong – it must be reinvented in order to make a new connection with the present. (Lee 1999:336)

Does this "flashing up" of an image of the past also represent "a moment of danger"? If Hong Kong and Shanghai represent a new space of cosmopolitan openness for the new China might the historical disappearance of *Shanghai modern* not also prefigure that of Hong Kong in 1997? Has Hong Kong woken up only at the moment of its disappearance? But what is this image that is being invoked and what is at stake in its survival or disappearance.

It is surely more than an "urban cultural sensibility", at least insofar as this is reduced to "urbanity"; it was more a space to think through the profound challenges of China's encounter with modernity. "Mediation" was not simply translation but concerned with new directions, new possibilities within a renewed modern China. These implications have been drawn out by Meng Yue's *Shanghai and the Edges of Empires* (2006) which attempts to reconstruct a number of different projects or moments in which the possibilities for a different kind of Chinese modernity might emerge from its encounter with the world. These possibilities emerged from Shanghai's position as a liminal site, at the intersection of different empires. These projects of culture (a pleasure garden), technology (the arsenal[3]), knowledge (publishing) and commerce (the *New World* entertainment centre) represented possibilities for a different Chinese modernity. The return of *Shanghai modern* was surely a re-opening of that space of dialogue about the possibilities of modernity in China, a space that had progressively narrowed until the forces of empire, war and revolution finally shut it down –subsequently channeling it within post-war Fordist-capitalist and communist modernization.

However, that cosmopolitan modernity represented by Shanghai's past and (possible) future was also being retrieved more generally in the 1980s and 1990s. The western literature on which Lee draws to help uncover Shanghai's modernity testifies to extensive work in cultural history and cultural studies which had rendered the linear narratives of modernization problematic. In Marshall Berman's seminal *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (1983) technological-industrial modernization and the socio-cultural forms of modernity to which this gives rise become uneasy bedfellows. Berman's continued commitment to the modern looked back to an older modernity than that represented by a "high modernism" which either uncritically welcomed or utterly rejected modernization. It was in the messy modernism of "the street", that Berman located the historical existential confrontation with both the dangers and possibilities of modernity. These possibilities had also been ironed flat by the different technocratic modernisatons of capitalism and communism, as had the messy streets by the urban planers and architects who served them.

Perry Anderson's famous response was to situate the promise of modernism in a particular moment before the Second World War which had now definitively disappeared (Anderson 1984). But Berman's intent was to open up the history of modernism to a wider material, and above all, urban culture of modernity and retrieve its possibilities for a contemporary historical moment.[4] As with Koolhaas' search for a more unruly modern urbanism than that of the International School, Berman's evocation of "the street" was part of a wider rejection of the Fordist city subject to zoning and functional planning. Indeed, the 1970s saw the beginning of that nostalgia for the 19th century city – with its anarchic energies and grotesque excesses – before it was tamed by Fordist planning.[5] This nostalgia was clearly associated with the disappearance of the industrial city and the first stirrings of

"culture-led urban regeneration" (Zukin 1982). But this retrieval of "modernism in the streets" was also a political one – part of the post-1968 New Left rejection of the older communist parties and a re-examination of culture and politics in the age of "the cultural is political". We might see the urban culture unearthed by Lee as both pre- and post-Communist, and it is so in a way that evokes a sense of the re-opening of possibilities much more exciting than any overdue re-insertion of Shanghai into global capitalism. Viewed in this light a return of *Shanghai modern* would present problems for those in the driving seat of the city's new round of modernization.

IV

Any archeology of *Shanghai modern*, concerned to excavate buried pasts and complicate the easy narratives of "standard sociopolitical histories", needs also to take cognizance of the hard choices forced on contemporary actors. Decisions were made and paths taken which can be reviewed but not belittled by the backward glance of contemporary cultural history and theory. The return of *Shanghai modern* would inevitably problematise the choices made and the roads taken. In particular it would re-open the debates on artistic and cultural autonomy of the 1930s and the codification of the CPC solution by Mao at Yan'an in 1946. Many of those educated, battle-hardened cadres who returned with the Red Army in 1949 were also looking to atone for their indulgences in the urban milieu of Shanghai and to justify their subsequent political decisions (Andreas 2009). However Shanghai might look from the vantage of Hong Kong, for those driving the city forward the archeology of the city's past was inevitably politically charged.

In the very last pages of his book Lee equates the return of cosmopolitanism with the opening up of Shanghai to foreign capital, as exemplified by its internationally designed architecture. This has:

> spurred a massive research project on Shanghai's history and culture[6]…[a]nd a new generation of Shanghai writers and poets have begun to explore…what they call a new "urban consciousness" (*dushi yishi*) – a subject of which they had previously known practically nothing. A journal called *Shanghai Culture* (Shanghai Wenhua) was launched in 1993 [and] reaffirms the "deep and solid foundation of the school of Shanghai culture, with its splendid tradition of assimilating outside culture with an open mind". (340)

It is against this too easy linkage that Ackbar Abbas responded in *Cosmopolitan De-scriptions: Shanghai and Hong Kong* (2000). He questioned the assumption that cosmopolitanism is an unproblematic, universal value. Cosmopolitanism was quite capable of operating side-by-side with nationalism and imperialism: "foreign domination and local appropriation are not necessarily mutually exclusive" (775). In Shanghai inequality – "splendour and squalor" – could be pushed to grotesque extremes; and this in turn reminds us that "the cosmopolitan 'attitude' in this case consists not in the toleration of difference but in the necessary cultivation

of indifference" (2000; 775). This is not to deny that in "negotiating the anomalies of extraterritoriality… a kind of grace comes out of the grotesque" (786) but it is to situate Shanghai in its "non-viable" context. Shanghai had managed to become one of the most open cities in the world:

> The other side of this freedom and openness, however, was a certain isolation—a linkage to the world that went together with a delinkage from the rest of China. There was always something very fragile about Shanghai cosmopolitanism. After 1949, Chinese communism, born in Shanghai, quickly made Shanghai's urban culture no more than a memory. (Abbas 2000: 776)

This is a crucial point because it places the task of modern nation-building – to which *Shanghai modern* contributed via its creation of a new "imagined community" (cf. Lee 1999: 45-50) – in a much more tragic light. Shanghai's cosmopolitanism had come at a certain cost – its delinkage from the rest of China – and it was incapable of effecting that transition to a real national community achieved by the Communist mobilization of the peasantry. It makes the easy narratives of the "interruption" of an incipient modernity represented by Shanghai much less easy to sustain. It also makes the return of Shanghai and its historical memory much more problematic.

Abbas points to the fact that the global space to which Shanghai is now (re-) opening up is not a space of "internationalism" but of "globalization", where the nation-state is now constantly bye-passed by global capital flows which move freely within and between localities. Abbas uses the term *glocalisation*, which was first used

> to describe the need to adapt a global outlook to local conditions, a kind of "micro-marketing"… [and as] encapsulated now in the corporate slogan "think globally, act locally," is a top-down approach to society, however: a hybrid term, it concludes by homogenising the hybrid and local. (784)

The notion of "cultural mediation" is no longer the job of the cosmopolitan open to otherness but of capitalism itself through a process of "arbitrage", where global capital finds ways of articulating itself within a series of different localities. The easy equation of cosmopolitanism with "openness" is not possible. That indifference Abbas saw in an earlier cosmopolitanism is now written into the very space of contemporary cities whose insertion into global flows have made them "non-places":

> The overcomplex space of non-places means, among other things, that even the anomalous detail may no longer be recognisable as such because it coexists with a swarm of other such details. This means the anomalous is in danger of turning non-descript, in much the same way that the more complex the city today, the more it becomes a city without qualities. The cosmopolitan as urban phenomenon is inevitably inscribed in such non-places and paradoxes… (772-3)

How does this phase of rapid urban expansion in an age of globalization leave the history of *Shanghai Modern*? The "massive research project on Shanghai's history and culture" noted by Lee was precisely meant to address this; it would position

"its splendid tradition of assimilating outside culture with an open mind" as a central resource for becoming a global city. As Wen-Hsin Yeh (2007) describes it,

> Shanghai historians rallied to throw their weight behind the city's modernization project and to make the intellectual case in favor of the outlined change…. [T]he historians, through their descriptions of the city's recent past, embraced Shanghai's modern history as a chronicle of Shanghai's uniqueness, if not China's pride. By doing so they set aside an old-fashioned, revolutionary belief and refashioned the city's urban identity. (211)

Is this the return of *Shanghai modern* anticipated by Lee? Not quite. Yeh goes on to describe the project in terms that would not appear out of step with the revisionist histories of the last thirty years.

> By shifting attention away from colonialism, capitalism, Nationalist betrayal, and Communist martyrdom, new images emerged that described a middle class city of material comfort in everyday life that was making steady progress in the enhancement of wealth and health…Instead of dwelling upon the structural injustices in the "social relations of production" under capitalism, the more innovative historians chronicled the scientific and technological advancement in "modes of production"[7] as the city underwent modernization… Pre-1949 Shanghai was the making…*neither* of the colonialists *nor* the capitalists. It was, instead the work of the petty urbanites who were the occupants… of the s*hikumen* residences. In the words of Zhang Zhongli, president of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, "The bottom line is: Shanghai was Chinese, Shanghai was Shanghainese. The city developed as a result of the people in Shanghai making innovations on inspirations taken from the West". (211-2)

This, I would suggest, is not a setting aside of the "old fashioned revolutionary belief" *per se*. It was the discourse of surpassing represented by the Pudong skyscrapers overlooking The Bund. It re-positioned the Communist party as able to lead a new modernization process in which primary industrialization within the context of social equality gave way to a modern market-driven urban consumer economy. As most observers noted, this rapid process of urban modernization was accompanied by large-scale urban demolition and re-location not seen in the West since the 1950s and 1960s. Lee notes the nostalgia for old Shanghai as a phenomenon in Shanghai as well as Hong Kong; but in fact much of this was a desperate attempt by people to stay in the real houses and real communities that they actually lived in. Nostalgia, like everything else, had to move pretty sharply in Shanghai because the *shikumen*'s return as memory-image happened at the same time as its disappearance in fact. And indeed as its re-appearance as style (Liang 2008; O'Connor & Xin Gu 2012). The paradoxes abound; the return of Shanghai is feted as a return of an older urban sensibility ironed flat by Communist modernization but is subjected to a top-down urban master-planned modernization worthy of Robert Moses.

This was a crucial insight of Abbas. Shanghai's rapid modernization did not remove the past completely – as in classic post-war urbanism – but engaged in demolition and preservation at the same time.

> Preservation in Shanghai is motivated by something quite different from the usual pieties about "cultural heritage," which, given the city's colonial past, can only be ambiguous. It is motivated more by anticipations of a new Shanghai to rival the old than simply by nostalgia for the past. In other words, preservation is something more complex than just a question of the past remembered: in Shanghai, the past allows the present to pursue the future; hence "memory" itself is select and fissured, sometimes indistinguishable from amnesia. This paradox of the past as the future's future also throws a particular light on Shanghai's urban development, which, like preservation, takes on a special quality: Shanghai today is not just a city on the make with the new and brash everywhere—as might be said more aptly of Shenzhen, for example. It is also something more subtle and historically elusive: the city as remake , a shot-by-shot reworking of a classic, with the latest technology, a different cast, and a new audience. Not "Back to the Future" but "Forward to the Past". (780)

Shanghai historians might provide the basis for a re-interpretation of the city's ambiguous colonial past in the light of present exigencies; many of the papers in this issue, Ma Ran and Lu Pan in particular, attest to some of the elisions and omissions in this process. But the past was also being mobilised as global image capital:

> Invoking a continuity with a legendary past—no matter how ambiguous that past may have been—enhances the city's attractiveness, gives it historical cachet, and hence equips it to compete for foreign investment and the tourist trade on more favourable terms. The past is a kind of symbolic capital. At the same time, preservation often accompanies the revitalization and gentrification of decaying areas of the city and contributes to urban renewal. (781)

What "past" underlies this "symbolic capital"? To a certain extent it is a ready-made image of that exotic "divine decadence" associated with Shanghai in the popular imagination of the West, readily promoted in travel magazines and fashion supplements. It is also, as we have suggested, used as an index of progress – this is what we have now absorbed and surpassed. But Abbas' reference to its role in "urban renewal" points also to something else. The messy modernity of "the streets", the pre-modernised, pre-Fordist city, key to the allure of Shanghai in both academic and popular references, is not being by-passed in Shanghai but adapted *as it had become* from the West. The possibilities evoked by Marshall Berman and grasped by a new generation of urban cultural policy thinkers and activists had, from the 1990s, become compromised by their association with city boosterism and real estate development. Indeed, the retrieval of modernism's wider connection with the material culture of urban modernity which Berman had helped inspire, had very easily drifted into a celebration of urban consumer cultures as an index of modernity on a par with that of technological modernization.

The "cultural intermediaries" identified by Sharon Zukin (1982), recreating a bohemian-artistic zone in the heart of Manhattan, were quickly replaced by the cultural "arbitrage" of a new kind of real estate development in which historical patina and neo-bohemian "cool" worked together. The "creative clusters" discussed by Sheng Zhong and Gu Xin in this issue were the result less of top-down planning (though they became that too) than incremental learning via a range of architects, artists, gallery owners, cultural policy agencies, Hong Kong and Tai-

wanese developers, academic "gurus" and so on in association with an emerging local and foreign clientele (cf. Ren 2011). A process of "mediation" or "arbitrage" at the micro level represented the day-to-day algorithms of a Shanghai culture-led urban regeneration which rapidly traversed that arc which had run between Jane Jacob's sixties paean to a "mixed-use" street-level neighborhood urbanism (1961) and the glitzy hang-outs of Richard Florida's creative class (2002).

V

For Wen-Hsin Yeh writing in 2007:

> the past…has ceased to have much relevance in Shanghai's relentless drive to climb the heights of material transformation in its embrace of the world. The city, thanks to the Shanghai historians, had liberated itself from the long-established master narrative of socialism against capitalism, and nationalism against colonialism. It had arrived happily at an almost "weightless" state free of the burden of its past. There were no more denunciations against the evils of capitalism or colonialism. Instead, what was materially beneficial for Shanghai had to be ethically good and historically right. (216)

The Shanghai authorities have "set aside" the discursive framework established since the Opium War and are "shedding the weight of history" (217). In this weightless state individual histories are allowed to float free, and vie with each other for "a place in urban memories". Memories are simply an aspect of each individual's identity with no connection to any historical narrative.

> But how do we know if we have reached an epochal moment in Shanghai's – or China's – history if so much of what we hear, said or unsaid, seems reminiscent, in bits and pieces at least, of century-old descriptions.

Another irony: in this account the return of the possibilities contained in Lee's *Shanghai modern* turned out to be their dissolution into individual reminiscences with no wider historical traction. Indeed, we are back with Jameson's end of temporality, the absence of any grand narrative other than that of capitalism expanding in space towards the horizon.

This seems to me to underplay the sense of history still claimed by the CPC and indeed its sensitivity to the fissures and ambiguities of its "innovative" re-writing of Shanghai's past – as we see throughout this issue. The "opening up" which many saw heralded by the return of *Shanghai modern* was highly partial; it was a retrieval of an urban heroic modernization – Manhattanism – without any of the open ambiguities of the modernity which went with this. Or rather, the ambiguities returned as style. It was a narrowing down or hollowing out of the promises of an older urban modernity into new forms of lifestyle consumption. The individuation of memories is not (only) the result of the weightlessness of postmodern history but the concomitant exclusion of any form of social input into the plans taken and decisions made by the city on behalf of its citizens.

But the "heroic modernization" of urban China – and its "trickle-down" economics of which Shanghai is emblematic – is a precarious balancing trick. Not only does it hope that those who "got rich first", in Deng Xiaoping's famous formulation (cf. Hewitt 2010), find ways of passing it down, but that the big Eastern cities find a way of passing it on to the interior. Neither of these appear to be happening, and in this context, with the growing unrest in town and country alike, history appears to be gaining weight again.

> It took Mao Zedong's genius to see, against the grain of orthodox Marxism, that even rural spaces, at least in the historical situation of China, had a crucial role to play in modern and national life. This was the insight that allowed Mao to displace cities in general from their role as the sole exclusive site of modernity—and Shanghai in particular from its claim to be China's preeminent city. After 1949, the city could no longer enjoy the privilege of being a law unto itself: it was clearly the nation that now held sway over the city. (Abbas 2000: 776)

Once again the lines of historical fissure appear not just within the city but between it and rural China. If Shanghai has a "messy modernity" it is to be found in the spaces created by the city's vast social inequalities and the difficulties faced by the authorities in sweeping the losers under the carpets of its *Prada* shops (cf. Anna Greenspan in this issue). Shanghai, like the other big cities, depends on rural China for the reproduction of the migrant, unregistered (because they are not allowed to be) workforce for which it refuses any social benefits (Lee 2007). These grotesqueries suggest a return of a messy modernity which no-one desired and which register Shanghai with Mike Davis' "Planet of Slums" (2006) as much as the municipal council's "City of Culture". Shanghai itself has its fissures that few writing in the *Shanghai modern* mode have adequately registered. It is a city that has not just been woken up, de-mummified and thrust into the global image maelstrom as the opening quotes imply; it is a de-industrialised city with as strong a sense of its collective industrial past as of its cosmopolitan openness. The "city of finance and culture" did not step into the vacant spaces left by older industries as in the West; it shoved them aside (see Xin Gu in this issue). As the monumental documentary *West of the Tracks* (Dir. Wang Bing, 2003) testifies, this has produced a powerful sense of loss throughout the great industrial (or "rustbelt") centre of China.

In this context history is not weightless but clearly at the heart of the contestation between rich and poor, powerful and powerless which is occurring in China – as elsewhere across the globe. Claims that the return of Shanghai to its leading role represent a return to the path of normal, Western modernity are thus somewhat double edged – for Western modernity is no longer what it was.

After a meticulous historical reconstruction of the Cultural Revolution – *Mao's Last Revolution* (2006) – in which their narrative voice remains firmly in the background, Roderick Macfarquhar and Michael Schoenhals allow themselves a highly charged conclusion. The attempt "to modernize whilst preserving their integrity as a people and a culture" (2006: 459) which had pre-occupied China

since the Opium War had floundered with the dissolution of Confucianism as Chinese "essence". The CCP replaced this with Marxism-Leninism; tired of aping foreigners (the Soviets) the Cultural Revolution "was [Mao's] last best effort to define and perpetuate a distinct Chinese essence in the modern world" (460). Its failures

> led Deng to abandon this vain search for a Chinese version of modernity that had preoccupied the nation's politicians and intellectuals for well over a century. China had to jump on the bandwagon of successful Western-style modernization that had proved so effective in Taiwan and elsewhere in east Asia. The Cultural Revolution became the economic and social watershed of modern Chinese history. (2006: 460)

History has fallen to earth again with a clang! Not just Communism but a distinct Chinese modernity is ruled as always impossible, and the whole century-long detour to Western modernization (that is, capitalism) has merely been a tale of "sound and fury". Lee's *Shanghai modern*, other than a premonition of China fully embracing Western modernization, disappears in smoke. In fact Macfarquhar and Schoenhals' assertions alert us to fact that *Shanghai modern* floated to the surface of historical consciousness at the same time that the Cultural Revolution, and the debates it had stirred up, was consigned to the outer darkness. Both "conservatives" and "liberals" both agree on this. That Shanghai was the capital of this Cultural Revolution is something that is buried deep, invisible other than the point zero from which the new Shanghai arose (Perry & Li 1997; Owen Hatherley in this issue).

The Cultural Revolution certainly undermined the legitimacy of the CPC, as Macfarquhar and Schoenhals argue, but did it undermine the legitimacy of the 1949 Revolution? What makes the Cultural Revolution so sensitive is not just the revelation of past excesses which the CPC is keen to move beyond, making good by its delivery of economic growth. The burial of the Cultural Revolution is used as proxy to bury those debates about class divisions and common ownership which neither the "conservatives" nor the "liberals" are keen to address. It sidesteps another, active "nostalgia" for that common collective effort involved in building a revolutionary Chinese nation which many now see as undergoing systematic and massive privatization. The skyscrapers of Shanghai might elicit the pride of some citizens; they certainly do not elicit the same identification as with the collective building of China's industrial base.

Mao's Last Revolution does not engage at all with the ideas being fought over in the Cultural Revolution – the actors are mere puppets in Mao's political maneuverings. We might point to two areas where this summary dismissal simply will not work. First, there has long been recognition of the importance of Mao's collectivization and rural industrialization for subsequent future growth (Spence 1999; Naughton 2007). A key area of debate is the emergence of the Town and Village Enterprises (TVEs) in the late 1970s and the way such "rural entrepreneurialism" fed into the reform process (cf. White 1998; Huang 2008; Andreas 2010). The point here is that the narratives of reform by conservatives and liberals

– agreeing on the benign nature of market-led reform but differing over the role of liberal democracy in this process – both present it as a break from the past. In fact something much more complex was occurring which concerned not just the roles of state and market but the specific nature of the state and the kind of market it was creating. Recent questions around the easy narrative of "market reforms" raised by Yasheng Huang (2008; and see Anna Greenspan in this issue) and the response by Joel Andreas (2010) raise exactly these questions from different political perspectives.

Second, Joel Andreas' work (2009) on the revolution and education ("better Red than Expert") since 1949 raises serious issues about the post-reform dismissal of the Cultural Revolution and its educational policies. Burying these debates about the relation between education and social class as so obviously beyond the pale is closely related to the rapid acceleration of social inequality in China and the solidification of a new kind of ruling elite reproduced (in part) through the restored university system.

Both of these debates chime with the attempt by the Chinese "new left" to find alternative accounts of the post-reform period in which new forms of state and collective ownership, markets, private enterprise and democratic accountability can be found. That is, a rejection of the neo-liberal model in both its western and Chinese versions (cf. Wang 2003). Indeed, my one caveat with Abbas' account is his portrait of the state as somehow redundant in this new world of global capitalism, other than its management of the past as image capital. In fact, it is become clear just how deeply constitutive the Chinese state has been of the capitalism it set in motion and continues to manage. Indeed, previously wary of exposing its managerialism in the high days of neo-liberalism before 2008, it has since made its power to firmly manage the economy a key source of differentiation between it and a West in deep economic trouble.

Debates in China about the role of the state still contain within them strong elements of the collective nation-building and social equity that gave rise to the 1949 revolution. Indeed, the heroic modernization still present in the cities of urban China – to which Hatherley in this issue attests – does gain a residual charge from that historic task assumed by the CPC. In these circumstances there is no reason to suggest that the weight of history has vanished in the smoke of economic growth. Not only are the social tensions clearly in evidence in China – with the legacy of the 1949 revolution still in play around demands for collective justice, however attenuated – but China is now rubbing against very different "edges of Empire" than those of *Shanghai modern*. China itself, as the world's second largest economy, sits at the table of the global hegemons, but as Abbas' presciently showed, the world of global modernity takes us beyond the age of nationalism into that of "empire" (Hardt & Negri 2002).

I certainly do not want here to resurrect some other myth of the Cultural Revolution to set against that of *Shanghai modern*. These two have been set against

each other as cosmopolitanism versus inwardness, but this opposition has hidden another less visible one: between ideals of collective consumption and social equity and the pleasures and freedoms of urban modernity. But the promises of *Shanghai modern* have been hollowed out by their incarnation in the glittery consumption of Shanghai, just as have the many of the social gains of the revolution. If there is some *impasse* in contemporary Chinese history it is that between the conservatives clamping down on democratic cultural expression and the liberals who see this as only possible in a free market.

Unlike Macfarquhar and Schoenhals the distinguished historian of China Mark Elwin suggests that the problems of Chinese modernity – raised in the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s, when Confucianism died as an intellectual force – are still very much with us.

> People can and do refer to "the" Chinese revolutions of 1911 and 1949, meaning in the main particular sequences of twentieth-century military and political events, and this is acceptable as shorthand. But perhaps the most effective way to acquire a feeling for these life-changing processes as a whole is to begin, not with the political on its own, or political events over a relatively brief space of time, but with the deeper changes in the imagined but emotionally powerful *stories* in terms of which people understand their lives, as a long-term phenomenon. (Elwin 2011: 83)

Elwin returns us to some key themes set out in that period which have remained with China since:

> This debate did not of course end in a single agreed programme; but it did identify a set of problems for China, relating to what we loosely call political, economic and social "modernity", which permanently altered the underlying nature of policy debate in China… The radical conceptual and cultural realignment associated with the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s has, in contrast [to 1911 and 1949], much more of the character of something that was all but inevitable and irreversible. (101)

Of course if, like Macfarquhar and Schoenhals, we collapse modernity into western modernity and both into western capitalist modernity – and they are not alone (Hutton 2007; Fergusson 2011) – then there is never going to be much wriggle room. But Elwin connects us here with the modernity evoked by Lee in *Shanghai modern*: how to deal with western modernity and to make it their own not at the level of imported institutions (though they have a place) but in the "stories in terms of which people understand their lives". This surely is the "urban cultural sensibility" Lee looked to in *Shanghai modern* but which in many respects became the mere image capital for a global skyline. Abbas, at the end of his article, asks what a contemporary cosmopolitan can be today:

> The cosmopolitan today will have to include at least some of the less privileged men and women placed or displaced in the transnational space of the city and who are trying to make sense of its spatial and temporal contradictions: the cosmopolitan not as a universalist arbiter of value, but as an arbitrageur/arbitrageuse.[] This is arbitrage with a difference. It does not mean the use of technologies to maximise profits in a global world but refers to everyday strategies for negotiating the disequilibria and dislocations that globalism has created [and].... to the larger historical lessons that can be drawn from our experiences of the city. (Abbas 2000: 786)

Uncoupling Chinese modernity from both Western and capitalist modernity might find a way to engage with a new heroic modernity – a frank acknowledgement of the challenges that face us and the means required to achieve this – in which collective action and provision is charged with the same libido as the individualised desires of consumption. This seems to lie behind some of the more recent attempts to retrieve modernism in the West (cf. Hatherley 2009), and it chimes with that of Berman and Koolhaus in the 1980s. It will mean a break with the nostalgic evocation of *Shanghai modern* as a lost world and a retrieval of the emergency situation in which an urban cultural sensibility was being carved out of a fragile, explosive political context. Because surely that is what we are faced with now?

Justin O'Connor is capacity building professor in the Creative Industries Faculty of Queensland University of Technology and visiting chair in the Department of humanities, Shanghai Jiaotong University. Previously Justin was professor of cultural industries at the University of Leeds and director of Manchester Metropolitan University's Institute for Popular Culture. He is currently working with Xin Gu on an Australian Research Council project on creative clusters in China, in partnership with Arup, Sydney, Shanghai Jiaotong University and Creative 100, Qingdao. E-mail: justin.oconnor@qut.edu.au

Notes

1 Frequently this is also via the writer Eileen Chang's exiled view of Shanghai from Hong Kong, though she later took up permanent exile in Los Angeles.

2 2042 was when the Special Autonomous Region of Honk Kong would revert back to the mainland political system. It was also the title of a film by Wong Kar-wai .

3 An archeological site recently obliterated by the Expo. On this mix of preservation and destruction of the past see Abbas (2000) and the papers by Lü Pan and Ma Ran in this issue.

4 In this it set a pattern for much subsequent work on the history of modernism; indeed it was Lee's opening chapters, in which he contextualized the modernist writers which made up the core of the book, which were most influential.

5 I might highlight in particular the seminar work by Jonathon Raban (1974) *Soft City*.

6 Lee acknowledges at this point that his book was written with financial support from this Shanghai Academy of Social Science research programme.

7 The quotations around these concepts are quite telling – clearly indicating that the author things they are merely lip service to a now out-dated Marxism. In fact "mode of production" should be "forces of production'.

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The Hyperstationary State: Five Walks in Search of the Future in Shanghai

By Owen Hatherley

Abstract

Shanghai is invariably used in film sets and popular discourse as an image of the future. But what sort of future can be found here? Is it a qualitative or quantitative advance? Is there any trace in the landscape of China's officially still-Communist ideology? Has the city become so contradictory as to be all-but unreadable? Contemporary Shanghai is often read as a purely capitalist spectacle, with the interruption between the colonial metropolis of the interwar years and the commercial megalopolis of today barely thought about. A sort of super-NEP has now visibly created one of the world's most visually capitalist cities, at least in its neon-lit night-time appearance and its skyline of competing pinnacles. Yet this seeming contradiction is invariably effaced, smoothed over in the reigning notion of the 'harmonious society'.

This essay is a series of beginners' impressions of the city's architecture, so it is deeply tentative, but it finds hints of various non-capitalist built forms – particularly a concomitance with Soviet Socialist Realist architecture of the 1950s. It finds at the same time a dramatic cityscape of primitive accumulation, with extreme juxtapositions between the pre-1990s city and the present. Finally, in an excursion to the 2010 Shanghai Expo, we find two attempts to revive the language of a more egalitarian urban politics; in the Venezuelan Pavilion, an unashamed exercise in '21st century socialism'; and in the 'Future Cities Pavilion', which balances a wildly contradictory series of possible futures, alternately fossil fuel-driven and ecological, egalitarian and neoliberal, as if they could all happen at the same time.

Keywords: Shanghai, China, Architecture, Urbanism, Contradiction, Modernism, Socialist Realism, Uneven Development, Neoliberalism, Communism, Expositions, Futurism

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Nothing in this world develops absolutely evenly; we must oppose the theory of even development or the theory of equilibrium.
Mao Zedong, 'On Contradiction', 1937

1. Flyovers

There is a theory about the People's Republic of China, voiced most recently in Boris Groys' intriguing, if historically nonsensical *The Communist Postscript* (2010), that what seems like merely the administration of capitalism by an oligarchy that is a Communist Party in nothing but name, is actually a gigantic, prolonged version of the New Economic Policy embarked upon by the Bolsheviks throughout the 1920s – the use of a dirigiste, state-planned capitalism to build up productive forces to a level where the population has gone from being poor to being reasonably comfortable, after which the Communist Party could take command of this wealth and use it for the building of full Communism, something which can, after all, in 'stage' theory only be achieved after the development of a mature industrial capitalism. This is at least what Deng Xiaoping always claimed was going on.

And this stage of 'building up the productive forces' has lasted thirty years – why not? Lenin, for instance, clearly envisaged that NEP would last a lot longer than the 8 years it got before it was replaced by Stalin's forced collectivisation, chaotic industrialisation and total suppression of private commerce. If we make what seems – with good reason – to be a rather extravagant theoretical leap, and see this as a super-NEP, what could the future Communist China do with the hypercapitalist infrastructure, the gated communities, the skyscraping office blocks, of the largest Chinese (and, in terms of 'city proper', largest world) city? One symptomatic question is – if, as is often claimed, China is making the world's biggest investment in green technology, then what are they going to do with all those flyovers?

Shanghai is laced with elevated roads, all built over the last ten years or so, at roughly the same time, but to rather more impressive effect, as the Metro system. That system of public transport is very nice, but aesthetically forgettable (and one

could contrast the extreme flamboyance and spaciousness of Soviet metro systems here); this system of flyovers is monstrous, dominant and utterly unforgettable. The friend who is showing me round tells me of a conversation he had with a Party member, on the (apparently still extant) left-wing of the CCP. When global warming really hits, when the oil runs out, and the use of the car has to be curbed, what will the Party do with all this? Can they just ban people from driving? Will people accept it? Yes, was the reply, but the Party merely lacks the will. So before I had even seen these constructions, I had in mind the idea of them cleared of the traffic which is too thick and dense even for their astonishing capaciousness, with bicycles and walkers making their way along these lofty elevated roads. They're one of the most impressive works of engineering I've ever seen, for the less than impressive function of moving the private car with its internal combustion engine from A to B – though, at least for the moment, taxis are so abundant and so cheap, sometimes equalling the levels of private cars, that to call it wholly 'private' feels a minor misnomer.

After driving along and under a few of them in a dazed, numb state when off the plane, the first of these flyovers that I really saw was in a working class district in the north of the city, near Caoyang New Village, a 1950s housing development which my friend was showing to his students. The area around it was so impossibly dense, the width of its expressways so yawning, the clusters of towers so high, the metro station toilets so abject (the PRC's inegalitarian public convenience policy is notable here – in an area where there are likely to be westerners present the loos are impeccable, elsewhere they're infernal) and the crowds so massive that I simply gave up and went back to bed, taking a photograph of two towers seemingly being eaten by the flyovers before passing out.

The flyovers too are hierarchical. While the flyovers in the centre have the smoothest-finished cream concrete you're ever likely to see, in the suburbs it's a much more standard material. They still tend to be rather dominant, but they're not meant to be looked at, and they travel through what is still a heavily industrial landscape, with huge factories on either side of the motorway. While some flyovers are meant for spectacle, these don't feel like they're meant for people at all, instead inducing the feeling of being a vulnerable fleshy part of a metallic network of freight, lessened only by the all-too-human aggressive driving that is ubiquitous here. There was one horrible

moment on one of these expressways where various container lorries constantly overtook each other, manoeuvring into position to the point where it seemed as if they were actually intent on crushing the pathetic little car we were in. But many of the flyovers really are meant to be seen.

Near People's Square, the former racetrack for the Europeans transformed post-revolution into a large public plaza, there's some sort of flyover convention, an intersection which is less spaghetti junction and more the intestines of a terrifying mythological beast. These sorts of organic metaphors tend to come to mind here, because there's little rationalistic or machinic about this place. The concrete itself is of the very highest grade, but note also how there is planting running half the way up the concrete pillars, an effort at civic beautification which is visible mainly to the pedestrian, more than to the driver. Presumably this is there as a gesture to The Harmonious Society, with nature intersecting with technology in non-antagonistic manner, but it's far more like the engineers kept in mind the possibility that sooner rather than later these monuments will be obsolete, so made them pre-ruined, with picturesque vegetation creeping up them to simulate what they might look like when they've fallen into desuetude.

They also serve to frame the skyscrapers around, to delineate them, present them in their best light, to let them be seen from a contemplative distance, which gives a futurist flash to what can often seem crushingly dense and badly made on closer inspection. Except that's the sort of thing only noticed later on – you don't notice the details. When I first saw the Huaihai intersection, I was absolutely

frozen in awe, and then impressed by the fact that everyone else seemed entirely used to it, that it had become normal, just something you'd cross under on the way to work. There's a general ability to seem completely unbothered by what feels like a bloody steamroller of gigantism and force here which is admirable, although slightly worrying. Groping around for comparisons, the nearest thing seems to be the spidery expressways of Los Angeles – but those course through a low-density suburban sprawl, rather than charging through super-dense conglomerations of competing skyscrapers. But here too, any putative Reyner Banham would probably find that the flyovers are the main event, works of public infrastructure more impressive than the baubles on top of the towers of capital. Their forcing through areas of already huge density necessitates an extra pedestrian layer being inserted into them – there's plenty of these intersections that have pedestrian walkways running across, such as the blue steel and glass pedway sandwiched between the roads in the last of the pictures above. There you can also see a pillar with some dragons on, some sort of tribute to the non-human forces that made this intersection possible.

Yet throughout Shanghai, and here especially, it's hard not to wonder – how does this work, how does this sustain itself, and how do you get to the point where you're entirely blasé about all this? Looking up at the flyovers, I'm as completely at a loss to get any impression of how all this works as I would be looking at an electrical diagram, only capable of interpreting it as an abstract sculpture or as a shocking biomorphic organism – a potentially lethal one, in both cases. But not as

a road. In terms of confrontation with an alien and awesome modernity, I feel here like the proverbial European visitor to New York or Chicago around 1920; the *components* of this cityscape are all familiar, there are no objects or forms I haven't seen before, but all of them have transformed into monstrous and illegible new combinations.

Keep the not-so-small nature of combined and uneven development out of your head for a moment, and the 'Shanghai as the Future' argument is the most seductive one of all the potential futures on offer in the dubious field of architectural futurology. To the untrained eye – *very* untrained – this seems the more preferable future city, more than the hooray-for-shanty-towns strain or the isn't-Dubai-like-super-interesting strain; the Foxconn factory in Shenzhen is a long way from the centre of Shanghai, and the ugliness of primitive accumulation is less immediately apparent; and I didn't see anyone sleeping under these flyovers. But the real reason why Shanghai-as-the-future is so convincing is because it looks like you imagined the future would look like when you were 14 years old. If the primary coloured wipe-clean architecture of New Labour Britain was designed by and for overgrown infants, Shanghai seems to have been designed by and for overgrown adolescent boys. It's as if the engineers, architects and planners watched *Akira* and, rather than, say, picking Richard Rogers' plans for Pudong, looked at the dystopian animated city and thought 'hmm, let's build *that* instead.' We'd be fools not to indulge the disappointed teenagers who hoped the 21st century would be a damn sight more aesthetically invigorating than Greenwich Millennium Village. If you feel you've been denied the future, then to find it elsewhere looking *exactly like you expected* is a little uncanny. Disappointing, if you thought the future should be qualitatively rather than quantitatively different from the past. Yet Shanghai's sheer revelling in its own modernity is very difficult to resist, at first, and it's most difficult to resist when you travel along the flyovers at night. 'What's this for?' I ask my friend, somewhat taken aback. 'Aesthetics!' he answers.

For the moment, then, abandon any critical edge and just salute the preposterous place, stare in abandonment at a city which lines its *flyovers* in endless strips of blue neon at night, that makes the mundane act of driving into an abstract procession of light and geometry, that intensifies the process of commuting into this outrageous onrush of non-objective sensation. There are apparently a lot of car crashes in Shanghai.

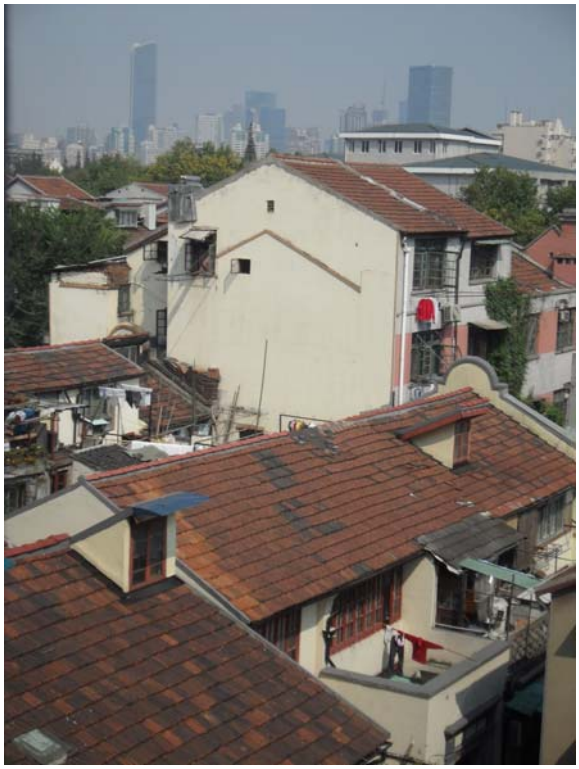
You eventually reach ground level at something like this, with pedestrian walkways cutting across neon-lit geodesic domes, skyscrapers with searchlights cutting through the ubiquitous fog, and some rather familiar corporate logos. This massive project of state-built infrastructure is the less trumpeted of the major public works in the city. There's the Metro, of course, with nine underground lines built in the time it takes to string a tram line from one side of Manchester to the other, but there's also the Maglev magnetic levitation train. I didn't take it, although by all accounts it's marvellous, for the main reason that it gets you – at record-breaking speed! – from the airport to the tabula rasa business district in Pudong, which was not where I was going. The Maglev might be the one area where the prolonged NEP of the People's Republic entailed doing something *differently*, where it put a genuinely advanced technology at the service of a public, rather than private means of transport, but compared with these monuments to the desire , as P.J O'Rourke delightfully puts it, of 1.3 billion people for a Buick, it seems paltry indeed (O'Rourke 2010).

2. The Juxtaposition

While I stood taking a photograph of tightly packed terrace paths leading to a cluster of skyscrapers, a sardonic voice from behind me said 'ah, I see you're doing *The Juxtaposition*'. 'It's ok, I did that all the time the first few weeks I was here'. The Juxtaposition is, however, all but irresistible for the amateur architectural photographer in Shanghai, as many articles and collections have made clear. This is The Juxtaposition in its purest form – a decidedly low-rise, tumble-down old Chinese street, with washing and power lines criss-crossing above your head (the washing lines have apparently been attacked in a 'Be Civilised!' campaign on behalf of the city government, along with the wearing of pyjamas outside) that terminates in a skyscraper. The point of The Juxtaposition is that it's the easiest way to capture in a single image the process of either a) the unrush of development that is soon to transform everyone's lives for the better, or b) the way that wealth has hardly 'trickled down' in contemporary China or c) the denigration and domination of traditional housing in the form of imported skyscrapers, depending on your aesthetics and politics.

Try a different Juxtaposition, and you find more ostensibly traditional houses, in rather better condition; as are many of the courtyard and terrace housing compounds that still make up a large proportion of the city, and once made up its majority. They're not what they seem at first, and to straightforwardly call them 'traditional' or 'indigenous' is to make something of a category mistake. In fact, the main forms – the alleyways of the *Lilong*, the redbrick compounds with their stone gates called *Shikumen* – are as much a product of modernity as anything else, a form of speculative housing created in the early 20th century combining 'Western' models

– the English terrace, the profitable maximisation of space, and quite often art deco detailing – with the hyper-dense models of Chinese cities. The photograph below is another way of doing The Juxtaposition. Again, the low-rise housing with the washing hung out to dry, with this time the sky-scrapers in the further background (this is a question of angle – just behind, but at a tricksy angle are the massive towers and malls of Xujiahui), and if you look closely at the windows, you'll notice that they're Crittals – the same metal windows you'd get in a 1930s semi. Which is also appropriate, as there's also a lot of 1930s semis in Shanghai.



The climate is not that of the places where 1930s semis are usually to be found. The city is stiflingly humid, even in October, and there's all all-pervasive smell which seems to be made up equally of exhaust fumes, open drains, sweet food and the plane trees planted everywhere by the French when they ran (this part of) the place; and all this is at its worst in the areas where there's most space and least shade. An extremely dense Lilong area is, for all its deficiencies of private space, climatically highly appropriate, the way the houses rear up to provide access and enclosure also a means of catching one's breath. It's an excellent way of (unintentionally, no doubt) providing a truly pedestrian architecture. This is where one might lament the destruction of these forms in favour of a pomo-meets-Corbusier landscape of towers and expressways, but actually this place is recently renovated, and in excellent nick, right down to the small details.

This sort of light, small-scale preservationism is not what is generally expected here. Some of these dense low-rises have been even more heavily Regenerated nearer the centre, selling various nick-nacks, with the probably unintentional effect of making the place feel like The Lanes in Brighton in clientèle, product and urban form. Here, more happily, it's just housing.

There is, famously, a housing development on the outskirts of Shanghai called Thames Town, which simulates suburban England; yet that's not merely some *Evil Paradises*-style innovation of the neoliberal city, but also a continuation of the urbanism of the International Settlements, when Shanghai was a semi-colonial city with an intricate proto-Apartheid system. They were already building the disingenuously traditionalist, hedge-protected, class-and-race-ridden world of classic English suburbia here in the 1920s – or was it partly an import from the imperial periphery into the imperial centre? There's an essay surely waiting to be written that places the birth of suburbia, as a way of sheltering from the urban proletariat, in the colonial city rather than Letchworth or Bedford Park. Yet even more than in North London, you have to leap through a fair few hoops in order to take photographs of these houses, so heavily guarded are they by sundry gates, hedges, driveways and walls. Some of the villas are picturesquely worn, some of them so heavily restored that it's very hard to tell if they were built in the 1920s or 2000s. Not for the first or last time here, any finessed Hegelian ordering of architectural history is completely confounded. Is this kitsch because it's a recent remaking of a colonial villa or is it kitsch because colonial villas are inherently kitsch? Or both?

Lots of the villas were subdivided during the Cultural Revolution, when briefly Shanghai was the Shanghai Commune, governed by an alliance of non-state bodies – militant, factory-based bodies like the Workers' Headquarters. In Shanghai, the largest industrial city in China at that time, as it was until very recently, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was more a genuinely 'proletarian' thing than a matter of student Red Guards having pitched battles with each other, something analysed in Elizabeth J Perry and Xun Li's *Proletarian Power* (1997). Here, if not elsewhere, the Cultural Revolutionaries' logic was undeniable – in a city this dense, it is and was obscene for one family to have so much space to themselves. What makes this place so unlike Finchley, or, one suspects, Thames Town, is the sheer closeness of such typical suburbanism to, not only the extremely dense Chinese compounds, but also the ultra-metropolitan architecture built in a more obviously European style. At one moment you might find a typical piece of late 19th/early 20th century *Groszstadtarchitektur*, occupying an entire block, which is right next to several one-family villas, like the burbs were built next to the metropolitan centre.

This is all a mild digression from the main matter of The Juxtaposition, because this might lead one to assume that the villas exist in their own space, that a viable suburbia could still exist in the centre of Shanghai. On the contrary – most of them are loomed over by high-rises. In one by Huaihai Road, next to an intriguing, almost brutalist-meets-deco-meets-Chinoiserie block of pre-war flats in purple engineering brick, you find a house with banners on it which I'm told are

protesting the apparently poor remuneration being offered by the city council to purchase the plot.

Here The Juxtaposition is once again in full effect, with the sheer gigantism of the towers making their precursors look even sillier. On close inspection, there's rather a lot going on here. What you have is, facing the street, basically what would have been facing the street in 1937 – the villas, obviously, the shops and restaurants, and also clusters of small blocks of flats, sometimes with architectural ambitions, like these Frank Lloyd Wright projections – and behind them, tower after tower of residential flats.

Yet there are still many of these villas and low-rise blocks of flats in the French Concession, particularly strangely, lots of them are left lining the main road, Huaihai Lu. On a train to Nanjing a few days later I flick through a bilingual in-train magazine, which has an article profiling this 'aristocratic' street and one of its former inhabitants, an industrialist who was involved in philanthropic causes of various kinds. The article was centred on the question of what really makes An Aristocrat, and asked in conclusion – is the true aristocrat merely someone who drives an SUV, who buys expensive gadgets and clothes, and surrounds himself with beautiful women? No – a true aristocrat is someone who is highly educated in arts, culture and science, keeps appraised of the social issues of the day, and donates to charitable causes. The ideological implications of all this were too much to think about on such brief acquaintance with contemporary China.

There are still, if you have someone telling you what to look for, ways of discerning the class and national differences in these places, though. The proliferation of satellite dishes in the block above, for instance, is a sign that it's a block occupied largely by expats, as, in a less high-tech version of the Great Firewall, Chinese residents are discouraged from getting dishes, lest they pick up television of dubious provenance. I did get the chance to watch some legal Chinese-English television, in a Nanjing hotel. It was a show called Luxury Time, in which a Chinese presenter spoke to a French couturier about the fact that he makes his clothes in China, something deeply unusual in the high-end market. As

the presenter repeatedly pointed out, the moral of the story is that China can produce niche goods too, not just mass-market sundries (This luxury has a Potemkin quality, sometimes. Nanjing, a place even more precipitously uneven than Shanghai but which I spent little enough time in to feel less qualified to pontificate about, has the most strikingly empty branch of Prada). Those socially concerned aristocrats, again.

It would be a fallacy, meanwhile, to assume that villas = rich, high-rise = poor, as the really untrained English eye might. These gates open out to a gated community of enormous concrete towers, not of little houses with gardens. The development, again in a strangely Brightonian moment, is called Embassy Court.

The long art deco block is also, if scaled down a little, something you could imagine on the Sussex coast. It is after all the sort of place those who used to live in the villas here might have moved to after 1949.

Of all the pre-war architecture left around – apart from the 1930s' almost-skyscrapers – the most memorable were the Shikumen. The comparison which is apparently usually made is to English terraces, as mentioned, and you can see some of that – and these are denser, deeper and darker than the most intricate and harsh of West Yorkshire back-to-backs – but this compound, at least, was apparently built for clerks, who could afford the elaborate ornament, rather than industrial workers, who presumably had to make do with something even smaller and darker; but, again, the darkness, if not the smallness, is a very rational approach to building in a place as humid as this. At the entrances to these courtyards there's usually a chap keeping an eye on the place, and a board with some information in Chinese. My friend was usually translating these, but stupidly I wasn't taking notes. Without wanting to denigrate in any way the much-overlooked (by the English at any rate) virtues of gigantic, serried and identical tower blocks, these courtyards and alleyways do feel genuinely special, with a feel of community and collectivity which feels very rare in any contemporary housing. Yet it would be ridiculous to insist that a population continue to live in places this cramped. Is there a way of replicating that without retro-kitsch? Could, or does, Shanghai have an equivalent to a Park Hill, a Byker Estate or a Walden Two, a place that tries to transfer this accidental ethos into something truly modern? At the entrance is a name and a date, 1927. The year that the first, abortive Communist Revolution broke out among the proletariat of the industrial city. It escaped to the countryside after being slaughtered en masse, returning 22 years later after having to gradually rewrite its theory about urban and industrial primacy inbetween.

The past is revived in other ways. On the outskirts, towards Jiaotong University's main campus, you can find a Klimt building, a piece of simulacrum Shanghai Secession. This piece of gratuitous Junkspace contains sgraffito work copied from the Viennese soft-porn decorator's corpus, and a silver Josef Hoffmann entrance. There are, as we shall see, many different ways of building where nothing was before, and this is one of the more symptomatic yet surreal approaches – to create here a version of Old Europe that could never, ever have existed in this form. In its wilful miscegenation it's in the tradition of 1920s Shanghai, a place which clearly always excelled at The Juxtaposition, both in architectural terms and in terms of having the extremely poor in the closest proximity to the extremely rich.

Yet the final juxtaposition here is to stand in for something I couldn't photograph. It might be the largest city of the world's largest manufacturing economy, but Shanghai itself is deindustrialising, and the Expo is on a massive brownfield site, just like the Stratford Olympics. What the city really makes its money from is a property boom, just like London. There was something horribly depressing in that realisation, akin to the amazed incomprehension when you check China's world position in terms of size of economy (2nd) and in per capita income (99th, below Jamaica, Albania and Angola, amongst others). Yet, as soon as you're out of the city, you're in the Yangtze River Delta, one of the most heavily industrial areas in the world, a mostly-continuous strip of cooling towers, factory farms, blast furnaces, big sheds and cities, places like Zhenjiang, the size of or double the size of Birmingham, each crowned with a couple of their own glittering, Jin Mao-style Chinesesque skyscrapers among the residential high-rises. You could see whole new towns, which nobody has moved into yet – not that you could always tell the difference, as the railway station platforms never have people on, as they file onto the platforms from airport-style waiting rooms above, leaving all these enormous cities looking disturbingly empty to the passing commuter whether they are or not – perhaps advisedly. This is a ground zero of primitive accumulation, the contemporary equivalent of the charred, destroyed landscapes of the north of England in the 1820s, an apocalyptic pandemonium wrenched out of the paintings of John Martin, set in and consuming an incongruously placid wetlands landscape.

Europeans born after the 1970s haven't ever seen an industrial economy going full-pelt. It's an incredible and horrible sight. I couldn't photograph it as we were on a high-speed train, which went from Shanghai to Nanjing in just over an hour – it takes 6 on the normal train. The nearest approximation to it of all the photographs I did take depicted a snatch of the suburban landscape on the way to Jiaotong university. Round here, it's all factories, instant cities and messy, gimcrack commerce, and in-between are small strips of the rural, with amputated villages and peasant remnants peeping out. When I took this, I thought I was looking at a wasteland in the foreground, but looking at it now, I wonder if they might be allotments, and that I'm looking at agriculture.

3. Megalopolis

If all that sounds like I have a problem with the ubiquitous high-rises of Shanghai, then that's not quite it. In a conversation when here, my Chinese-speaking interlocutor interrupted my spiel on the skyscrapers here with the well-placed phrase 'Koolhaas alert!' and one of Koolhaas' smarter statements on matters East Asian was that it's somewhat unseemly how Europe is so panicky and hand-wringing about high-rise when in much of the rest of the world it's just the normal means of accommodation. Yet the high-rises are as strange, fascinating and worrying as anything else here, a form which has gone mutant, and as Koolhaas is one of the few to have ever seriously analysed this - by which I mean in the absolutely peerless 'Junkspace', not in OMA's sillier or more glib pronouncements and projects - to end up with a certain amount of Koolhaasism is an occupational hazard here (Koolhaas, 2002). Below is a view of Xujiahui, one of the Shanghai districts which were designated as capitalistic Special Economic Zone in the early 90s expansion of market reforms that followed the 1989 protests and the Tiananmen massacre. It's dominated by two towers called the 'Grand Gateway'. They do something rather typical for Shanghai. Mostly, they're smooth, SOM or late-Foster glass skins, but at ground level they're typical pink-glass shopping malls, the sort of tat you'd expect to find in 80s London or today's Moscow.

The fact is, architectural periodisation is completely meaningless here. In Shanghai there wasn't really a socially engaged Modernism along the lines of the Congres International d'Architecture Moderne in the interwar years, there was Moderne, Art Deco; and after the war, Stalinist Gothick and unpretentious (but hardly modernist) utilitarianism prevailed. Now, in the skyline, you can pick out everything from historicism to pomo to Constructivism to Expressionism to serene Miesian Modernism, with the only logic seeming to be that rather chaotic notion of Harmony and Pluralism. There is one unacknowleged influence on the contemporary skyline, and that's Socialist Realist, or more precisely Stalinist architecture. I'm not using that as a pejorative, but as a description.

Above is a typical example - serried, identical towers, with south-facing aspect, generously proportioned windows and breathing space inbetween, which are dressed with clearly machined-ornament, whether the pitched roof at the top or in the 'brick' coursing at the corners. It's not the crass, appallingly planned, architecturally illiterate, Zhdanov-goes-to-Vegas Yuri Luzhkov style drolly described as 'Capitalist Realism' (Meuser & Goldhorn, 2006), but something with rather more conviction and thought behind it; it comes out of a combination of market preferences which the UK market, for instance, is unwilling to service (the south-facing aspect), and state edicts - the pinnacles that you find on every block and which have such an effect on the Shanghai skyline, are the result of state policy, to stop extra floors being built on top, as they were in boomtime Hong Kong; like the New York Zoning Code analysed by Hugh Ferriss, Corbusier and Koolhaas (Koolhaas 1994), is dirigisme leading to delirium, rather than a pure, Babylonian capitalist potlatch. What it *really* is, is the modernist spatial planning of the Congres Internationale d'Architecture Moderne going Classicist, and here we should remember that the architect Andrei Burov, one of the CIAM's 20s Soviet contacts, was later one of the leaders of Socialist Realist architecture, pioneering the use of prefabricated ornament in monumental construction. Much of contemporary Shanghai is the fusion of Burov's two preoccupations into a new architecture.

The block above does this with more demented panache than any other I see here - the sheer length and height of it, slathered in all kinds of prefabricated 'stone', with the particular approach coming very, very close indeed to the style of 1950s Moscow; except rather than the boulevard-and-courtyard approach, it's towers geometrically organised in parkland. This is another unphotographable prospect, because this is one of eight identical towers stretching all the way past a main road in the southern suburbs. The lower, retail block in front is part of the same tabula rasa. The approach is redolent of the notorious photograph of a statue factory in the 70s USSR churning out identical Lenins, and I'd be intrigued to see a picture of the ornamental production line. Elsewhere, you occasionally find a pure example of a neo-Karl Marx Allee approach, although these were almost completely unphotographable....more often, you have small pavilions to the street and towers spiralling off into the distance just behind, of staggering density.

So in short, contemporary Shanghai is in many ways the fusion of the two architectures that contemporary urbanists find most uncomfortable - the repetition and lack of any 'street' in CIAM/Athens Charter high modernism, and the imposingly monumental, obsessively ornamental approach of the Soviet Union in its fully Imperial, pre-Khrushchev pomp.

Appropriately enough, there is one fully fledged example in central Shanghai of the full-blown Stalin style - the former Palace of Sino-Soviet Friendship, one of those peculiar 'gifts from the Soviet people' that were built in satellite states in the early 1950s - see also the Stalinallee, the Warsaw Palace of Culture and Science...with the difference that China was never really a satellite, and after the Sino-Soviet split it became the Shanghai Exhibition Centre (and I think 'Top Marques' is another instance of Luxury Time). Aside from all the Corbusier-meets-Lev-Rudnev, which is more prevalent in the residential suburbs, the other main influence - and I hesitate to call it that - is the Manhattanism that prevailed before a more sober modernism made it across the Atlantic, and similarly it's a serendipitous consequence of planning edicts.

That's not to suggest that it's all a pure matter of importation and adaptation. In one of the extraordinary essays in his 1998*Terminal Architecture*, the late lamented Martin Pawley included one on 'Asia Reinvents the Skyscraper', where he pointed out how all of the innovations in skyscraper construction since the Sears Tower and the World Trade Centre were completed in the 1970s took place in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Seoul, Taipei and (lastly) Shanghai, while

Europe and America retreated into the aforementioned handwringing. He'd no doubt have added Dubai and Abu Dhabi if he'd written it a decade later, but as it is, the analysis is about protectionist, developmentalist capitalism rather than neoliberal dreamcities. It discusses overlooked architects like C.Y Lee, and argues that they started to influence international architects like Skidmore Owings Merrill and Kohn Pedersen Fox, not the other way round. However, the difference with Shanghai is that it already had a skyscraper urbanism 60 years beforehand, which can even now be seen, crowded in by its grandchildren.

The Park Hotel, the finest of these, was designed in 1932 by Ladislaus Hudec, a Hungarian architect, and it partakes of the clinker Expressionism of the period - it's like something in Hamburg, only gone up to full skyscraper velocity, but with a very similar approach to the Baltic nautical style. It's rather beautiful, and coexists rather well with its groping-for-attention partners, like the wonderfully absurd UFO-topped Radisson. Inside, though, it's not quite so Expressionist. It's the international luxury style of the 1930s, an opulent streamline classicism that could be found in the Queen Mary, or indeed in the Overlook Hotel.There's a similar sense of guilt and horror just offstage from the dinner jackets and bobbed hair.

Liverpool was the British Empire's main attempt at a real 20th century urbanism of steel frames and high-rises, and accordingly a lot of Shanghai looks like Liverpool. The still-extant firm of Palmer & Turner were the main architects of this Mersey-on-Yangtze, and it should be noted that they are now wholly an Asian firm. In their colonial days they designed is the clocktower of the racing club, from whose racetrack the People's Square was created, and from which you get a marvellous view of the Puxi skyline, where the 1930s are hardly visible – the Shanghai Number One Department Store can be seen in the bottom right-hand corner, dwarfed.

The towers take the planning requirement for an anti-speculative pinnacle very seriously, setting out to use it as an excuse for proper Gotham spectacle, to varying effect. Some of them have a Babylonian power which marks them out as true successors to 1930s Spectacle-Architecture, the attempt to ennoble and glorify hotels, trading floors and suchlike. The aesthetically worthwhile towers are in the minority, but they're also often the tallest. The largest above is the Shimao International Plaza, the fourth largest in the city, designed (apparently) by Ingenhoven, Overdiek und Partner, East China Architecture and Design Institute. Like lots of these things, it's mostly a hotel - 48 of its 60 storeys. Those prongs at the top and the general thrusting gives the requisite sense of the overpowering, a latent violence and paranoia. As does this, Tomorrow Square.

There's not much in the way of even today's circumscribed architectural avant-garde in the Shanghai skyline; the starchitects are elsewhere. There's Holl and OMA in Beijing, Hadid in Guangzhou, but here the main monuments are by Skidmore Owings and Merril, Kohn Pedersen Fox, and of course John Portman. Tomorrow Square is one of Portman's hotels. The hotel designer and entrepreneur whose LA Westin Buonaventura was Jameson's defining moment for postmodernist architecture – a new architecture which, in Jameson's case, very presciently had nothing to do with the shortlived Michael Graves/Terry Farrell bells and whistles ornamental style, although that too has many descendants in contemporary Shanghai (Jameson 1991). The presence of Portman, always an exemplar of the entirely unashamed melding of art and development, is another reminder of how a socially concerned Modernism makes little sense in the Shanghai cityscape. What Portman's firm are very good at, however, is designing sleek and sinister buildings, and Tomorrow Square is a marvellous example of it – mute, inscrutable, and like the Shimao, with a science fiction hint that all that frippery at the top might have some function, as a launch pad, or in some way be convertible into some piece of technological villainy.

In ‘Communist’ China, some – like Nick Land in his book on the Shanghai Expo (2010) – seem very pleased that Modernism in Shanghai essentially picks up where New York left off before the 1932 *The International Style* exhibition, before the central Europeans with their Commie ideas got in the way of Manhattanism’s path (in its Shanghainese form), interrupting the play of eclecticism and miscegenation, and of spectacle. Land laments the *Style’s* purism, as most sensible historians would, but given the cheerleading for Chinese neoliberalism, it’s also clearly an argument based on expunging much of what is relevant in Modernism to our wildly unequal cities, leaving it also as mere style, just not a style of unadorned surfaces and flat roofs. Eclectic spectacle, purist spectacle, it’s all much the same, and neither have much to do with, say, Brutalism or Constructivism – but the aesthetic charge of the Shanghai skyline is furious and undeniable – at times, at least.

The name People’s Square evidently has some reference to the People’s Square it stands in front of. So what is the connection between Tomorrow and the People? In 1989, People’s Square was a place of assembly and protest but it didn’t see any massacres, apparently because of the constant presence of armed forces looming over the plaza. The Shanghai authorities’ handling of the situation earned them a prominent place in government – Jiang Zemin, most obviously, whose Three Represents became Chinese neoliberalism’s numerical successor to the Four Olds and the Four Modernisations. The square is of course loomed over by these skyscrapers, but also by a far less interesting city governmental building. Evidently the Party has little interest in emulating the capitalist delirium all around, or even at joining in the extraordinary CIAM Stalinism of the outlying residential areas, instead providing something sober and bland, with perhaps a little hint of the Fascistic stripped skyscraper style favoured by the Kuomintang.

The square is filled also with various kinds of advertainment, little corporate pavilions, which help to keep any more *dubious* uses at bay. Around is the pedestrianised strip of Nanjing Road, and more Manhattanism. An angular tower-and-base design with skyway round the back is a superlatively cranky composition, a much earlier example of the interesting things that can occur with ultra-density, when you have to force a tall building rudely into a site. A short walk from here, to The Bund, the command centre of the International Settlement in the semi-colonial era, is in order – specifically indoors, to the portals of Palmer and Turner's Peace Hotel. The Hotel is of almost-skyscraper proportions, slightly smaller than the Liver Building, Liverpool; and the opulence of the place is matched only by what is, by contemporary standards, a rather small scale entrance, with no vast atria, although the construction technology would have allowed at least a grander entrance than there is here. It's very much an earlier, more buttoned-up opulence than the dance-before-the-Japanese-come style of the Park Hotel, opalescent and exquisite. There's one section where reliefs show the hotel as it fitted into the cityscape at the time, with rickshaws passing by. Its green mock-Chinese peak anticipates the legally obliged peaks of today:

Next to it is the same firm's Bank of China building, which my guide considers to be an example of 'Kuomintang Fascist architecture', combining the symmetrical, stone-dressed modern classicism of Mussolini's Italy with fairly tacked-on Chinese details. The pronounced vertical emphasis, though, puts it squarely in the almost-skyscraper category – in fact, this one can probably get the 'almost' taken away. It was finished in 1937, the last on the Bund before the very

similar neo-deco Peninsula Hotel, which is Shanghai's foremost example of Luxury Time. However, the people in front of it are photographing in the other direction.

The Bund's curve along the riverside now faces one of the unambiguously Good Things about contemporary Shanghai, a fantastic public space, an Improvement made as part of the Expo year. It's one part riverside promenade and one part square, and it is absolutely full of people, all photographing each other, as it should be. The tower just behind the 1910s-30s skyline was, we were quite sure, a direct transposition of the Ziggurat in Metropolis, and it has one of the most compellingly megalopolitan architectural elements in the Shanghai skyline – a searchlight as part of its illuminated crown. This is the Custom House, the Liver Building abroad – the most Liverpudlian building ever erected outside of Merseyside. There are currently proposals from Chinese property developers to build around the historic Liverpool skyline a 'Shanghai-inspired' new high-rise district in order to return the favour, but the city seems less than keen, which is a little unsporting. And then, the lights went on. They come on roughly all at the same time, between 6 and 7pm. They vibrate, they pulsate, they shimmer different colours, they declare different slogans, and they give the effect of a city of excitement and melodrama, somewhere which, like New York in the 1930s, ought to be inspiring great poetry, films, and music, but strangely doesn't actually seem to be, by all accounts (most of those I speak to on the matter agree that the art and music scene in 'bureaucratic' Beijing is far superior).

If the architecture has antecedents in Sino-Manhattanism, or China's transcendence of Manhattanism as described by Martin Pawley (1998), then the lighting has more in common with the abstract play of light in Weimar Germany,

the sort of thing profiled in Janet Ward's *Weimar Surfaces* (Ward 2001), more than it does of the dully literal advertising lightscape of 1930s American, or the simple giant banal adverts of contemporary East European cities. The lights are mostly not really selling anything in particular, their spectacle is more complex. The floodlighting of the Bund is part of that rather than a historicist riposte, establishing a link between the two eras of determined display. The more raffish buildings are especially appropriate – the Hugh Ferriss Babel of Broadway Mansions is dressed with yellow neon, the very English-industrial bridge in front in vivid red.

Many of the Bund's buildings have the red flag of the People's Republic flying from them, something which forces you into a minor double-take, realising that it signifies something quite different here, or rather it does now. The Custom House's chimes play 'The East is Red' on the hour. The smaller, earlier public space here is where the notorious sign that didn't actually say 'No Dogs or Chinese Allowed' but did say something very similar in more polite language used to be, and it now has two monuments to the revolution that ended that.

One of them is typical figurative flag-waving hurrah socialist realism, and aside from a couple of curious snappers, lots of whom must be provincials up for the Expo, the large crowds entirely ignore it.

The Monument to the People's Heroes, meanwhile, is completely abstract – it could be a monument to practically anything, and it could be admired by a Speer as much as a Mies – which doesn't stop it being a rather powerful sculptural object, its rectitude a contrast with everything around as much as its high-rise form is a complement to it. Whether it conveys the Chinese people's struggle against imperialism and capitalism is less certain.

Yet the architectural money shot, if you please, the thing that everyone in front of the Bund was taking photographs of rather than of the Bund itself (developmentalism winning an aesthetic victory over imperialism, there), is the skyline view. A clear vista like this is pretty damn rare in Shanghai, because of the height of everything else and the ubiquitous smog, so when you get it it's all the more breathtaking. This is the skyline not of Puxi, the only built-up side of the Huangpu river until the early 90s, but of Pudong, the area that is really an entire new town which sprang up from marshland after Shanghai was designated a Special Economic Zone – something the Chinese government originally refrained from, in order not to encourage the massively uneven development that made parts of Shanghai into one of the most modern cities in the world in the 1930s while horrifying poverty stalked much of the rest of the city, and of China. That the return to fully uneven development should coincide with the notion of the Harmonious Society is one of those ironies of history.

The skyline itself as the lights come on, like the expressways at night, is a joy that only a churl couldn't be in any way moved by, as if the Empire State Building couldn't be enjoyed because of the Dust Bowl (some *did* argue that, of course). To pick out details – the giant illuminated globes again, Adrian Smith's smooth, tapering, gorgeously elegant World Financial Centre, the improbable declaration 'I

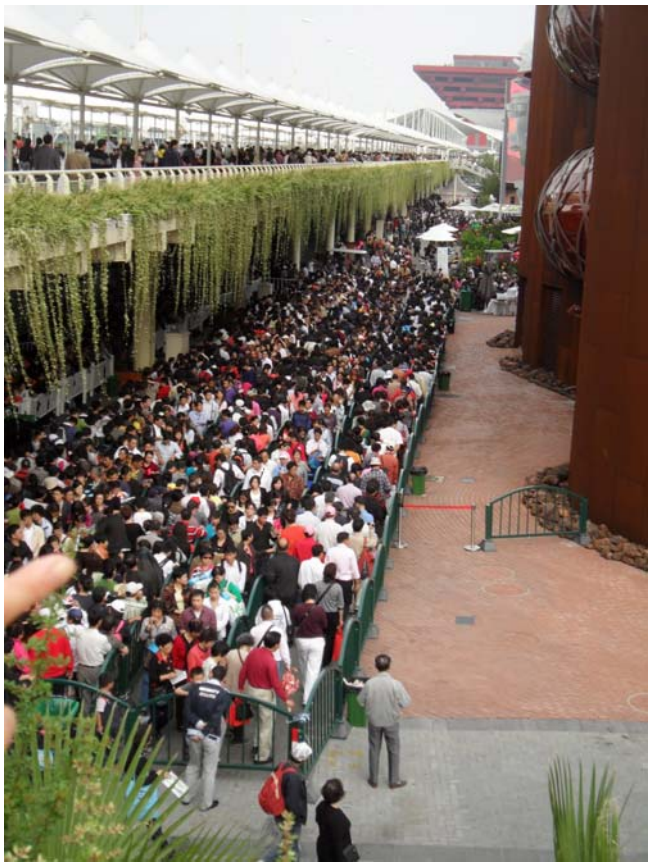
Heart Expo' on the part of the Taiwanese Aurora company's offices, the pulsating lights extending even to the Expo-sponsored sightseeing boats (replacing much unsightly freight)...and, in the form of Oriental Pearl TV Tower, the curious feeling, once again, that you've seen the future somewhere before...that the future resembles very closely the past's idea of the future. It's the Space Needle or the Berlin Fernsehturm with an extra spiked bollock. There's no time, evidently, to imagine a new idea of the future.

On my second day here, as we sat in a cab careering northwards, my friend argued that what looks like it's moving at a thousand miles per hour is slowing down – that the famously accelerated growth rates are falling, but are still high enough (and the promise of success, symbolised by that empty Prada in Nanjing, is enough) to prevent any explosive social unrest; and yet the country's 600 million poor peasants aren't going to be on Luxury Time any time soon. In short, that China is actually approaching the stationary state, that it will soon enough be the most powerful country in the world and still a poor one. Just like the Soviet Union, the world's second largest economy from the 1950s to the 1980s. Only this time the American adversary will be tithed and indebted to them. I found this all rather hard to take when careering down a ten lane expressway lined with gargantuan skyscrapers, that made the continent I'm coming from seem utterly petty and provincial, but after ten days and several books it started to sink in. Perhaps one concept that could be applied to what's happening here now is one taken from music, Simon Reynolds' (2011) notion of *Hyperstasis.* A whizz-bang

brightly coloured gymnastic everything-at-once eclecticism which, while enormously immediate and sometimes completely thrilling, almost seems designed to hide the fact that no new forms are actually being created, that there are no new ideas behind it, and that any alliance between art and politics, any revolution of everyday life, has disappeared from the agenda. The hyperstationary state?

The lights all come on between 6 and 7, but the concomitant of that is that they all go off at around midnight. The apparent reasoning behind this is derived from environmental imperatives – all that wasted electricity – but the effect is 'ok, you've had your fun, now go to bed'. The intended effect of the lights might be to present a vibrant and delirious techno city that never sleeps, but it's hard to be the city that never sleeps when you have to get up at first thing in the morning for a day of hard, hard work.

4. Expo (International)



It's difficult to quite capture the magnitude of the Shanghai Expo. In one sense, it's another example of the bizarrely retro-futurist nature of Chinese ultramodernity – the dams, the skyscrapers, the UFO– topped hotels, the neon – and here an Expo, the first to have received the slightest bit of public attention since Hanover in 2000, which was noticed purely because Kraftwerk did the (delightfully retro-futurist) theme tune, or the Calatrava-popularising Seville in 1992; but, basically, this is the first of any note since Expo '70 in Osaka. For Nick Land in his Expo guide, this means China is waking us up from the long nostalgic sleep of postmodernism, letting us revel once again in the thrills of a real urban modernity (Land 2010). There is at least some truth to that. The first thing you notice in the Expo confirms this – the hulking pedestrian bridges that traverse it, and in that even here, the infrastructure is an enormous and unavoidable

presence, the walkways lifting us from the tedium of the eyes on the street; and the second thing proves that things are really rather more complicated. That second thing is the queues.

The Expo's site extends across an area on the scale of a decent-sized industrial town, on both sides of the Huangpu river, hence necessitating a metro line to get from the Pudong side (the international pavilions, the bit in the magazines) and the Puxi side (the national and corporate pavilions); this comes free with your ticket. Reports suggest there were some major attempts to engineer the visitor figures above Osaka 70's record, with workers taken there on their holidays whether they wanted to or not; and those queues are astonishing. All around the site, giant screens inform you which Pavilions have queues that might last two to four hours. That most state socialist thing, an endless, bickering queue, dominates this showcase of dynamic, eclectic, ultra-capitalist spectacle. And everyone not in a queue is taking photos. Like most of contemporary Shanghai, the Expo doesn't exactly discourage foreigners, but it's also pretty clear it's not *for* them; it's presented as a way of seeing the world without leaving China, as an enormous festival, as a temporary theme park, as an Olympics (the clean-up job on the city, in both senses of the term, was apparently more intense than Beijing's before 2008), a mass event, and emphatically not a matter for disinterested *flanerie*. It's about crowds, and woe betide anyone that can't take a heavy crowd here; by this point I had started to get used to it. Those crowds, or rather those queues, weren't so much there to look at the architecture, but the stuff inside – which pavilion had a '4D film', which had the best freebies, which was serving what food.

My friend suggested we meet outside Venezuela; the route there took me through part of Eastern Europe. I walked first past Bosnia, one of many retoolings of a basic shed design provided by the Expo authorities for free for those who can't pay for their own architects. These decorated sheds had their moments, generally being more fun the less seriously they took themselves. Too much of it was good taste high architecture, so the undisputed winner of the Denise Scott-Brown Memorial Decorated Shed Award was 'Europe's Last Dictatorship', the post-Soviet state highest on the Human Development Index, Belarus. Its piece of Mittel-european silliness is perhaps inspired in some way by the Belarussian Marc Chagall, or maybe it's inspired by chocolate boxes, Soyuzmultfilm and neo-classicism, but it seemed the most popular of the East European sheds for photographers either way.

Venezuela, our meeting point, had far greater architectural ambitions, housed in a rather excellent pavilion by Facundo Teran, a dramatic but non-ingratiating sculptural creation, its clashing volumes centred (in a manner which distantly recalls Melnikov's similarly politically charged Soviet Pavilion at the Paris Expo '25) on a steep staircase. While I sat here, one – I would say definitely *not* Shanghainese – visitor came and sat his son next to me, and went off to take a photo of him next to this amusing *Laowai*.

The Bolivarian Republic is next to its comrade in Latin American Socialism, Cuba, but sadly puts it completely in the shade – even within the limits of the free shed genre, a hell of a lot more could have been done than their sad little red and blue box, which clearly showed the likely very austere grip of the Raul Castro regime. However, those of us who still hold out hope for 21st Century Socialism found a great deal to admire about the Venezuelan Pavilion – in fact, its similarity to Melnikov and Rodchenko's presence in Paris in 1925 or El Lissitsky's in Cologne 1928 is much more than an aesthetic matter. The queue, however, was pretty mild – a mere 15 minutes – suggesting that word had spread among Expo visitors that there wasn't much to see in here.

First of all, the pavilion makes very clear that it takes the Expo slogan 'Better City, Better Life' more seriously than does perhaps its originators, only expanding it out rather further, across 'Mejor Mundo'. The theme of the Pavilion is, quite simply, 'Revolution' – and bear in mind here that the last 'revolution' here, in the late 1960s, is now held in massive governmental opprobrium. Here, as so often

with the Bolivarian Republic, they talk such a fantastic fight that if I judged the place purely on this pavilion, I'd probably emigrate there at once. It all sounded more than just a little pointed. 'Everybody may get involved and take decisions in politics, economy and culture' 'a country where all are included'; and surely, in a subliminal reference to Shanghai's hyperstasis: 'a revolution makes everything move again'.

Cut-out figures give testimonials of all the things the Bolivarian Revolution has done for them – stories of collective ownership, co-operatives, workers' councils, of expropriation, of non-alienated labour, told by construction workers, teachers, slum youth. My friend points out that 'nobody reads the signs on anything in the Expo', so it is perhaps a little misjudged in its heavily textual approach. He does find one gentleman reading them with great intensity, and asks him in Mandarin 'so what do you think of all this talk of revolution?' 'It's great – but it'd be a long story to tell you why', was the response. 60 000 people were displaced from their homes to make way for the Expo.

The Pavilion is a series of rooms with canted stairs going off at angles from them, and on the ground floor, open to the air, there are several definitions of what Revolution might be, printed on cotton blinds. It is, respectively, Individual Revolution, Collective Revolution, World Revolution. The central part of the Venezuela Pavilion is where the freebies are given out – here, it's chocolate and coffee, and on the coffee tables are, in classic national pavilion style, descriptions of the country's cash crops; and, in far from classic national pavilion style, descriptions of its class and historical relations, like the role of the sugar industry in the slave trade. The aspect of the Venezuelan Pavilion where all of this suddenly seems to be too good to be true is at the back end, where you get a lovely view of a steelworks, one of the few non-adapted parts of what was once the industrial centre of China's greatest industrial city. At the back of the Venezuela Pavilion are thousands of red, plastic flowers, with the following message: 'if the climate were a bank, it would have been bailed out by now'. True enough. As any fool knows, the Bolivarian Revolution's reforms have been paid for by oil revenues.

Yet if there's a cause for optimism in the Shanghai Expo it's in this place, somewhere which argues that better cities and better lives aren't caused by throwing tens of thousands of people out of their homes, or by 'civilisation' campaigns aimed at the uncouth proletariat. Architecturally, too, it's more rigorous than most, its pleasures and surprises discovered through exploration and circulation rather than in an instant hit, a sight-bite.

After this, it's pretty much *all* about the sight-bite. Some of these are great, some quite diverting (such as Mexico's giant bloody great multicoloured mushrooms), some forgettable, some awful in either a good or a bad way. I only covered Europe and Central/South America, aside from brief peeks at Australia (Parametric, of the bulgy organic variety) and Thailand (Disney Orientalism). As

has been pointed out, there are two common threads to the Expo's eclecticism – a folksy doilytecture, and the inevitable Parametricism. Even great sworn historical enemies are united in their love for the doily. The Cossacky wobbly hetman hats of the Russian Federation face the more successful doily style of Poland, which in this case is combined with another fetish, the Deleuzian Fold. Much (even?) less interesting was Romania, although there was perhaps a reminisce or several here of earlier Expo buildings, with the effect resembling Bucky Fuller designing one of those wildly popular Eastern European green-glass malls. It was also the most authentically tacky, the one which realised that this was a theme park. Nothing serious.

The unserious was however best represented by the Netherlands. There has been a curious change in the political and architectural perception of the Netherlands from the UK in the last couple of years – from bastion of tolerance to centre of anti-Muslim racism, and from centre of modernist rectitude to apostle of the bumptious new pomo. It was hard to conjure up even a vulgar Marxist explanation for this congruence, as the new Dutch postmodernism is so far from being comforting, classical and Volkish, so clearly poking fun at any hint of Heideggerian notions of eternal dwelling. The Dutch Pavilion, by John Kormeling, is called Happy Street. It combines two big silly ideas – a giant flower and an airborne 'street' of typically Dutch houses (where De Stijl goes next to the gabled) – where one would have been more than enough. There are actually some quite interesting things in the sheer complexity of the structure, its winding stairs, stilts and walkways, making it seem as much MC Esher as MC Hammer; but there is still something grating; perhaps it's because the irony in Happy Street is laid on pretty bloody thick. The ATMs are in a part of the Happy Street called Happy Money.

Its obverse is the British Pavilion, a surprisingly successful 'seed cathedral', with one idea which it carries out with relative aplomb. Its simplicity is equally impressive in the face of something like the Swiss Pavilion, where greenwash is expressed via the green roof and photovoltaic lights which constantly switch themselves on and off. The thuggery of its concrete pillars was a bit of a surprise, though, a rare bit of visible construction, and a reminder of the Expo's spectacular unsustainability.

Aside from Venezuela, the Pavilion which showed real ideas, a viable future, a way out, was the Spanish Pavilion, by Bendetta Tagliabue of EMBT. Described schematically, it is as pat as any – the façade is pieced together out of wicker baskets, which is a Reference to local craft; and the aesthetic of wood and organicism is usually rather tired. The difference, the distinction, is not at the level of the conceptual imaginary, but the tectonic physicality, the corporal force; the way the bits of wicker are assembled, the way they bulge forth, and the way that the wicker gives a bristling, uncanny force to the whole construction – if this plays with metaphors of the 'natural' then it's a monstrous nature, suggesting strange and beautiful creatures that we haven't yet imagined. It's a *bestial* architecture, at the same time as being clearly the most cleverly detailed and fastidious construction here. I didn't go inside; by some accounts, the interior is less successful; but of all the Pavilions, it is unexpected to find that the one made out of baskets is the one which (in architectural, if not, unlike Venezuela, social, terms) really suggests possible new paths for architecture – which is, after all, surely the architectural point of an Expo in the first place. If the retro-futurist conjuring trick is successful, and Shanghai 2010 really *does* come to be remembered like London 1851, Paris 1889, 1925 and 1937, New York 1939, Brussels 1958, Montreal 1967 and Osaka 1970, then this will undoubtedly

be one of the structures whose dismantling we will mourn.

There are a few things in the Expo which will not be dismantled. The China Pavilion, a futurist-traditionalist red pagoda, which features on all the branding; the Expo auditorium next to it, the walkways and bridges, the Metro line; and, more interestingly, a 'wetlands park' in the marshes along the Huangpu. This really is a remarkable creation, mainly because of the suddenness of the transition – one moment you're in a massive crush of people either wandering, photographing or queuing, the next there's almost nobody else to be seen, and given the 'civilising' obliteration of portside river traffic, it is extremely quiet. It has the feel of a place already forgotten, and has a magnificent view of the world's largest concrete suspension bridge, just in case it all starts to feel too pastoral. Small, rickety-feeling constructions are the main architectural intervention into the park. There's nothing to *see* here, and hence the frankly astonishing unpopularity – you wonder whether surely at least a few people might make it here to catch their breath after one of the crushing crowds or the endless queues, but seemingly not. Its values are too different to those of the rest of the Expo.

At this point it starts to get dark, and the blue neon switches on, as do the little lights behind the lego squares of the Serbian Pavilion (which 'derives specific code out of multitude'), leaving the Spanish Pavilion dark and darkling alongside; and it's time to cross the river to the other side of the Expo, for the delights of Oil, General Motors, the Pavilion of Footprint, Urban Best Practices, and The Future.

5. Expo (Corporate)

It might sound counter-intuitive or perverse, but to really get the feel of futurism, delirium, pseudo-science and spectacle that should accompany any Great Exposition, you had to cross the river to get to the Puxi side of the Expo, or as everyone seemed to be calling it, the 'corporate side' – the part that is a reminder that an Expo is, and always has been, one level little more than a glorified Trade Fair. Perhaps I thought that this was the area of true metropolitan thrills mainly because I got there as the lights switched on. When you emerge from the Metro line that gets you from one side of the river to the other, the first thing you see is the aforementioned concrete suspension bridge illuminated in different colours (purple, but in a second it'll be red, then yellow, then blue...) and, in the foreground, the sight of the turnstiles that process (some of) the millions of visitors. This is the Edutainment side of the river, a series of promotional and would-be-educational pavilions which may well be quite prosaic in the humid light of day, but which at night easily match their fancy-foreign-architect-designed equivalents on the other side of the river.

It's also here that the contradictions of the Expo's 'Green agenda' are most easily visible. Much attention has been paid to (e.g.) the sheer waste of the Expo (from its opponents) or to the use of electric buses as transport (from its supporters). On the Puxi side is the part of the site that indulges in some adaptive re-use. This was the industrial area of the city, and as its functions are hived off to the exurban pandemonium of the Yangtze River Delta, it is freed up as another brownfield site, like any other in Northern Europe. As well as containing various shipyards, dock sheds and a power station, it was apparently also the site of the much older Shanghai Arsenal, the cradle of the Chinese industrial revolution – none of which has been preserved. Above is the Pavilion of Footprint, which has instructive material on the carbon footprint. It sits opposite OIL.

OIL is one of the most fabulous architectural objects in the entire expo, its polygonal form constantly pulsating with polychromatic electric colour, with Alsopian wonky pilotis underneath, similarly vivid. If there's one serious evident architectural innovation in this place, then it's the total fearlessness about using electric light in its most aggressive, least 'tasteful' manner, with extreme garishness and maximum effect. If you tried to do something like this in most European cities various excuses would be offered to prevent it – crassness, tastelessness, commercialism, 'light pollution'...or perhaps more convincingly, a massive drain on scarce energy resources. Yet these things are already lit up at night, so you don't bump into them. It's surely at least in part a continuation of Lenin's old equation socialism = soviet power + electrification, only with the first

part of the equation forgotten. But it reminds of how Mayakovsky, when he wrote on Paris, scorned how the bourgeoisie, after inventing electric light, prefered to eat by candlelight. The enduring affect of Shanghai as I remember it was a feeling of oppressiveness and difficulty interspersed with sudden moments of euphoria. Almost all those moments of euphoria entailed staring at neon lights.

You see this approach to lighting in all manner of places, and it need not even signify 'futurism' or the metropolis – in Nanjing's historic centre, the ancient capital outlines its undulating and spiking roofs in contrasting strips of multicoloured neon. By way of comparison, imagine what would occur if there were a proposal to do the same to the dreaming spires of Oxford. Yet obviously there *are* certain unpleasant resonances, particularly in the case of OIL, which cannot be denied. The faceted end of it here is enlivened by a video showing oil derricks at work, which, like the skin of the building itself, is constantly changing. Inside, and hence the large queues, is one of those '4D films'; underneath, in English and Chinese, is a warning against pregnant women or those with heart problems entering the Pavilion.

Similarly vivid is the Chinese Railways Pavilion, where the grid of the railways is the object of illuminated abstraction. If Expos are where an epoch dreams its successor, then the libidinal force applied here to the furtherance of public transport is somewhat more impressive than OIL; although here as ever there is never any sense that all these things can't happily coexist, no matter how antagonistic they might appear to intrinsically be. Again, it represents the ideal

rather than the real, which in this case is the so-so mediocrity (in design, if not functional terms) of the Shanghai Metro.

Yet fittingly, given the central role of containerisation and shipping in China's rise to the world's second economic power, the thing here that is really special is the China Shipping Pavilion; here, containerisation chooses the best architects, perhaps in acknowledgement that it's a process which would have enraptured any Constructivist. This is another piece of adaptive re-use, this time of a shipyard, and the approach here – interestingly, given that it's there to represent such a closed and securitised system – is strikingly open. Piranesi comparisons are overdone, but there really is something sublimely carceral about these elevated walkways under the steel frame of the roof, all of them lit up for maximum noir effect. It gives container shipping *son et lumiere*. And you can just walk up and wander round here. No queues. There is an entrance at the side to the actual exhibits, but for the most part this is a permeable structure, which you can wander through at will, to your heart's content, although when I did so I can't say it educated me in any way about the activities of China Shipping. What it did do was offer a vivid sliver of Fun Palace openness and changeability, in a place which is otherwise based on a completely closed architecture. A city like the Expo would be nightmarish, largely because there's no courtyards, no indeterminate or communal spaces between – save for that lonely wetlands park.

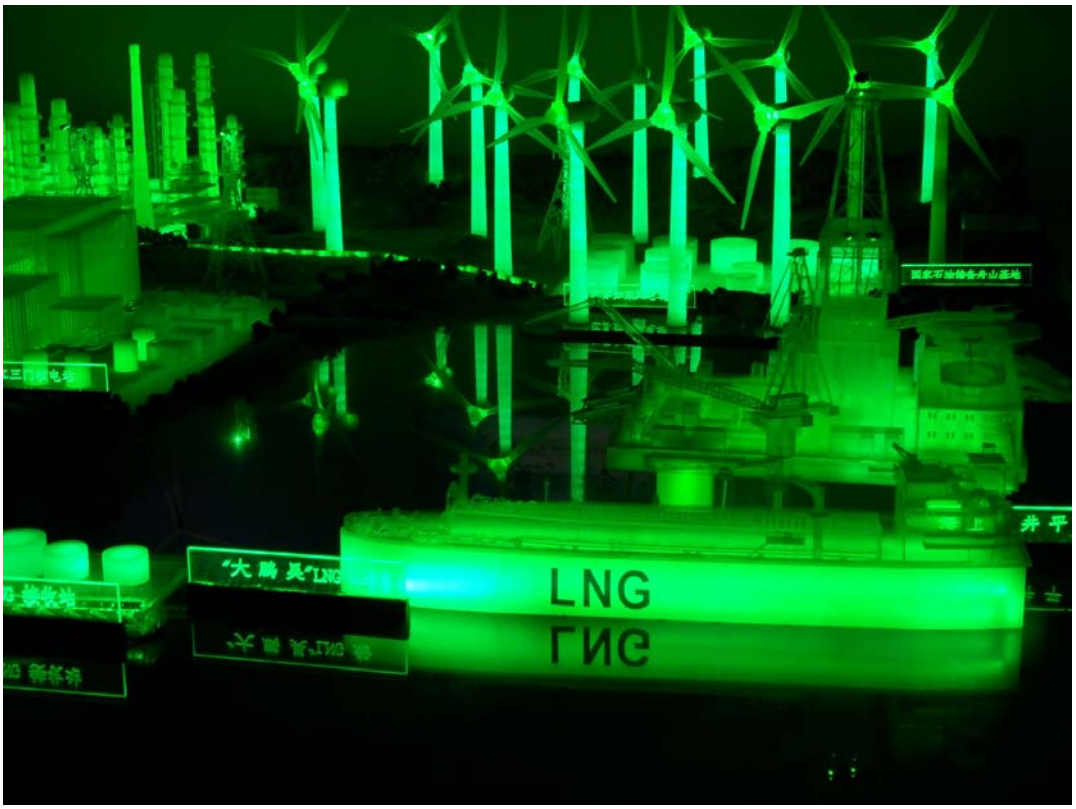
The aforementioned closed architectures do throw up some fairly breathtaking moments, here very much by accident. What is mediocre blobitecture in daylight

becomes something much more exciting when lit up, like strange neon grubs or larvae. This is a mere preamble to the corporate side's least popular, and for anyone expecting contemporary China to offer a viable vision of the future, most interesting Pavilion – the Pavilion of Future, heralded by a giant, illuminated chimney-cum-thermometer. It's housed in a power station, just as it would be anywhere else, although they struggle to manage to fill the enormous space. Perhaps the reason why the queues are so short here (about 10 minute, less even than the queue for Venezuela) is actually because this place doesn't get full easily. The Future Pavilion doesn't have any freebies, but it does have a pile of giant books at its centre. In that stack you can find a litany of urban utopias – Campanella, Plato, Francis Bacon, Fourier, More, Mumford, Wright, and the proverbial curveball, David Harvey's *Spaces of Hope*, sandwiched in just underneath *The New Atlantis*. The explanation for this collection is found on the opposite wall: 'in yesterday's utopia we find today's reality'.

Yes, they really are saying that contemporary Shanghai is the fulfilment of the hopes of the generations, that they come to fruition here, in some manner; but this is not meant as a statement of complacency, far from it. In the room with the stack of books, there are various urban utopias, from Archigram's Walking City to the Ville Radieuse. There's a wonderful moment in the exhibit on Le Corbusier where, while in Europe or the USA you'd find the usual hand-wringing denunciation of all the evils he wreaked on the innocent slums, there's the line 'sadly, Le Corbusier's ideas were never fully appreciated in his lifetime'.

Proposals are sometimes set against each other, but arbitrarily. On a screen, a 'Space City' is proposed by the Lifeboat Foundation, a Libertarian eschatological think tank, which, in a piece of impressive synchronicity, includes the historian of the 1939 World's Fair, David Gelernter, among its members. The organisation was started after September 11, and its aim is to preserve the human race, and the entirely unashamed telos of their plan for our survival is to colonise outer space. These really are people who think it's easier – and more desirable – to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Look closely to read the simple explanation of how their space city will work. Next to it is Eco City, which essentially appears to propose a 'sustainable' Industrial Revolution. 'We need to reinvent everything' is a criteria of Eco City. Near to that is Water City, which proposes that we grow artificial gills. And 'the views would be great'. The future cities in the Future Pavilion rest on certain major assumptions, some more debatable than others. The first is that cities cannot remain as they are; the second is that they will face enormous challenges due to drastic global warming; and the third is that all ideas are of equal value, and that there is no need to set up an opposition between Space City and Eco City. Everything is equally valid – the barest hint of a contradiction and you suspect they'd start worrying they'd end up with a Cultural Revolution on their hands.

So in the corner, not far away from the underwater aquatic city, is a model that sums up the sheer idleness of this, the idiocy of pretending that all contradictions can be resolved. It's a marquette of a gigantic energy-generating complex, and oil refineries go next to wind turbines go next to oil tankers go next to a cubic power station which goes next to pylons which go next to serried cooling towers, just like those lining the charred landscape of the Yangtze River Delta. There isn't the slightest hint that this energy-generating complex in its lurid, apocalyptic, radioactive green, or OIL, or Space City, or the Expo itself, might lead to the situation described so cheerfully in Water City. Evolution, presumably, will decide for itself. Outside is one of the entrances, its turnstiles strikingly empty. It's late, and soon the pulsating lights will be switched off.



Owen Hatherley is the author of Militant Modernism (Zero, 2009), A Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain (Verso, 2010) and Uncommon – an essay on Pulp (Zero, 2011). He has two books forthcoming in 2012, Across the Plaza, a short work on public squares in East-Central Europe, for Strelka, and A New Kind of Bleak – Journeys through Urban Britain, for Verso. He recently completed a thesis on Americanism in the Weimar Republic and the Soviet Union, at Birkbeck College, London. E-mail: Email: owenhatherley@googlemail.com

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The Power of Spectacle

By Anna Greenspan

Abstract

When people say Shanghai looks like the future the setting is almost always the same. Evening descends and the skyscrapers clustered on the eastern shore of the Huangpu light up. Super towers are transformed into giant screens. The spectacular skyline, all neon and lasers and LED, looms as a science fiction backdrop. Staring out from the Bund, across to Pudong, one senses the reemergence of what JG Ballard once described as an ”electric and lurid city, more exciting than any other in the world.” The high-speed development of Pudong – in particular the financial district of Lujiazui – is the symbol of contemporary Shanghai and of China’s miraculous rise.

Yet, Pudong is also taken as a sign of much that is wrong with China’s new urbanism. To critics the sci-fi skyline is an emblem of the city’s shallowness, which focuses all attention on its glossy facade. Many share the sentiment of free market economist Milton Friedman who, when visiting Pudong famously derided the brand new spectacle as a giant Potemkin village. Nothing but “the statist monument for a dead pharaoh,” he is quoted as saying.

This article explores Pudong in order to investigate the way spectacle functions in China’s most dynamic metropolis. It argues that the skeptical hostility towards spectacle is rooted in the particularities of a Western philosophical tradition that insists on penetrating the surface, associating falsity with darkness and truth with light.

In contrast, China has long recognized the power of spectacle (most famously inventing gunpowder but using it only for fireworks). Alongside this comes an acceptance of a shadowy world that belongs to the dark. This acknowledgment of both darkness and light found in traditional Chinese culture (expressed by the constant revolutions of the yin/yang symbol) may provide an alternative method for thinking about the tension between the spectacular visions of planners and the unexpected and shadowy disruptions from the street.

Keywords: Shanghai, spectacle, urbanity

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That which lets now the dark, now the light appear is dao – Laozi

There is a "before and after" photograph of Shanghai, taken 20 years apart, that periodically circulates through cyberspace.[1] The contrasting images zoom in on the shores of the Huangpu, the city's main river. By fast forwarding through time, they maximize the impact of the recent urban mutation. The result is a visceral illustration of the shocking intensity of Shanghai's high-speed rise. In the sepia toned image from 1990, the Huangpu acts as a sharp divide, the line separating urban density from rural sprawl. While the western shore (Puxi) is dominated by the colonial architecture of a once modern metropolis, the Pudong district, in the East, is nothing but a nondescript flatland of factories, shanty-town housing and farmland. Zhao Qizheng, a government official charged with the development of Pudong, bemoaned the imbalance of the time, describing 1990s Shanghai as a "mal-developed cripple" (Zhao, Qizheng & Yudong Shao 2008: 10).

The contrasting picture, of Shanghai 2010, is taken at night, when the city is awash with neon and LED lights. Pudong, by then home to one of the densest clusters of skyscrapers in the world, now dominates the urban landscape. In this image the city resembles the backdrop to a science fiction fantasy with whole buildings metamorphosing into screens. Here, in these illuminated high-rises with their garish explosion of color, China's economic miracle receives its most vivid and concrete manifestation.

This awe-inspiring view of Pudong has become the quintessential icon of 21st century Shanghai. It is the face of China's development, the window onto the country's current modernization. This is why stories about the country's rise are so often accompanied by an image of Pudong's skyline. This chapter begins with the futuristic vision of Pudong in order to explore the vital role that spectacle plays in the contemporary Chinese metropolis.

Shanghai is a city obsessed with its own image. This was especially apparent in the lead up to Expo, when giant billboards and video screens unabashedly declared Shanghai's ambitions for growth. This self-reflexive PR, however, hardly needs the excuse of a giant event. Here, hype forms an integral part of the landscape. Shanghai is often identified with its most stylish female inhabitants (Shanghai's femininity versus Beijing's masculinity is one of the key components of the long and ongoing haipai versus jingpai debate).[2] Living here one gets the sense that the city itself takes great delight in gazing in the mirror, preening. Shops selling luxury brands are multiplying everywhere, despite the fact that few Shanghainese can afford them. The malls that house them are so empty that locals call them ghost malls, but this doesn't seem to be a problem.[3] As China's image of growth, Shanghai is pure window display.

This fascination with façade is frequently condemned. To critics, Shanghai's embrace of urban spectacle is tied to a harmful neglect of the needs and desires of the real, living city. There is no doubt that this destructive idea of the spectacle is increasingly at work in Shanghai. Aligned with the all too common conception

that the modern is necessarily Western, it manifests itself in the intermittent campaigns to clean up the streets. At their worst, these clean up crusades accentuate a damaging lack of confidence, and seek to erase all signs of a local "backward" "uncivilized" culture. Street food, hanging laundry and people in pajamas[4] are all forcefully replaced with a tired, depressing view of Global Shanghai filled with Gucci stores and KFCs.[5]

There is, however, another, much more positive notion of spectacle that is also at play in the city today. In this alternative vision, spectacle is not equated with the falsity of illusion and the darkness of deceit, as it is in the Western philosophical tradition. Instead, it is rooted in Chinese culture and thought, which has its own understanding of shadow and light, and operates with a decidedly different attitude to what is revealed on the surface and what is concealed beneath. Under this more indigenous conception, spectacle is itself productive, both because of what it can attract and also – even more vitally – because it allows for another realm to operate freely in the shadows. In this positive conception, the power of spectacle can help create a 21st century metropolis in which a dazzling science fiction skyline can comfortably coexist with the rich, vibrant and chaotic urbanism of the street.

In his book *Postcards From Tomorrow Square*, which reports on his impressions from China, journalist James Fallows comments on the seemingly incomprehensible disjunction found throughout Shanghai. "I have not before been anyplace that seemed simultaneously so controlled and so out of control," he writes. "The control is from on high… What's out of control is everything else" (Fallows 2008). Inside China, a popular saying captures this critical dichotomy: Policies above, counter-strategies below *(shangyou zhengce, xiayou duice*). Shanghai's future, as we will see, depends on the unfolding of this unprecedented, unpredictable mix of the planned urban spectacle on one hand and, on the other, the city's unplanned culture that takes place in the darkness, hidden from view.

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Pudong has always been infused with spectacle. Dreams of Shanghai's reimagined Eastern shore date back to the beginnings of the 20th century. In I921 Sun Yat Sen proposed a plan for the "Great Port of Pudong" deeming it essential to the project of national reconstruction. The grandiose vision included redirecting the Huangpu, drowning out the colonial buildings of the Bund and creating a new modern port (Macpherson 1994).

For decades, this grandiose fantasy was buried by China's tumultuous history of revolution and war. But, in the early 1980's, as soon as Deng Xiaoping's strategy of opening and reform began taking root elsewhere, the seeds of Pudong's resurrection were planted. A decade later in 1990 premier Li Peng officially sanctioned the development of the Pudong New Area (Macpherson 1994: 57). Large scale

urban planning in the area, however, did not occur until after Deng Xiaoping's 1992 tour of the south when, in an oft quoted statement, Deng expressed regret over his policy with respect to Shanghai. "Looking back [I realize that] one of my main mistakes was not including Shanghai when I designated the four Special Economic Zones" (quoted in Chen 2007: 59) he told his welcoming crowd. In Shanghai, Deng's words were interpreted as a green light for the spectacular ambitions for Pudong. Pudong would be built as a sign of the nation's reemergence – a symbolic commercial center that would overshadow the colonial legacy of the Bund.

Zhu Rongji, mayor of Shanghai from 1988-1991, and the person most often credited with the development of the district, saw Pudong as a way of ending Shanghai's isolation; a test case for the new open door policies, which sought economic efficiency, an increasing role for markets, and rapid economic growth. As boosters publicly stated at the time, Pudong "demonstrates the determination of the nation to open a wider door to the outside world" (Macpherson 1994: 57). Pudong's central business district was especially conceived, as research by Kris Olds reveals, as a giant PR exercise. Planners impressed with the urban monumentality they had seen in the cities of Europe (Pudong owes much to Paris' La Defense) envisioned the gleaming skyscrapers and striking skylines as icons to the "successes of China's open door policy" (Huang quoted in Olds 1997: 116). From the start, Shanghai's new CBD, said Huang Fuxiang, who was leading the team at the Shanghai Urban Planning and Design Institute (SUPDI), was to be a "symbol and image of the results of reform" (Olds 1997, 116). "The tall buildings in Lujiazui were not built to satisfy the need for vertical expansion due to the lack of horizontal space," argues academic Non Arkaraprasertkul, "but for the purpose of generating monumental symbolic value" (2011). In overshadowing the Bund, icon to a previous age, Pudong was designed as the emblem of a new Chinese modernity.

True to Pudong's spirit of openness, Premier Zhu who was dissatisfied with the level of urban expertise on the mainland, sought help from the outside. In 1993, in consultation with the *Institut d'Amenagement et d'Urbanisme de la Region d'Ile de France* in Paris, Zhu announced an international competition for the development of Lujiazui and invited a host of top architectural firms to compete. Four teams, Richard Rogers, Toyo Ito, Massimiliano Fuksas, and Dominique Perrault submitted detailed planning proposals for the heart of Pudong. Officials carefully considered all these plans and then, in a move that would later be frequently repeated, dismissed them all. In the end, the project was awarded to SUPDI, a local company that understood the environment, was familiar with the site and its politics and could be trusted to work with the required speed. In creating their final blueprint the institute incorporated elements from many of the foreign proposals but gave them Chinese characteristics, adapting them to local needs. The final design had certain fixed elements, the wide central axis and the cluster of three

super tall towers for example, but it also ensured a large amount of flexibility for future construction.

The importance of the international architectural competition, then, was not so much for the particular blueprints it offered but rather as an early key to Pudong's publicity campaign. The competition, writes Olds, “was viewed by the Shanghai Municipal Government as a mediatised publicity show, a discursive event which would raise the international profile of Lujiazui and Pudong (Olds 1997: 117). The fact that in the end the foreign input had only a minimal impact mattered little since, as Olds explains, their role was largely promotional (Ibid). Once the competition was complete, the images, diagrams and models created by the famous firms could be replicated in brochures and websites and used to lure in attention and investment, Pudong, then, even in its planning phase, was understood as a branding exercise, a method of attracting foreign investment and solidifying domestic support.

This strategy of constructing a spectacle in Pudong is still in explicit use today. The 1999-2020 comprehensive plan promises to “further the image construction of Pudong New Area.” Pudong, then, is still conceived as showcase. Its glistening, majestic super-tall skyscrapers are the ultimate photogenic objects. They exist both to be gazed at and gazed through. Like all of Shanghai, they are best viewed at night, when the whole city is awash with lights and projection and entire buildings are transformed into screens, further accentuating the flat surface of things.

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In a work called “Santa’s Little Helpers” local artist Chen Hangfeng cleverly captured this propensity of the city to present only its glittery facade. The piece consists of video recordings taken in the nearby villages of Zhejiang province where family run back room factories produce – painstakingly, by hand – the majority of the world’s Christmas decorations. At the show, the videos were placed inside large boxes wrapped in paper and decorated with bows. To see them, viewers had to stoop over and peer through a peephole that was deliberately placed in an uncomfortable position. In Shanghai to look past the surface takes work.

Critics, scorn this superficiality with derisive disdain. They berate the city for presenting a dazzling exterior that blinds people to the truth buried below the surface sheen. In Shanghai when old buildings fall into disrepair bricks are not repaired they are simply painted over. In the mass urban clean-up that took place for the World Expo doorways, gates and fences were made to sparkle and shine, while everything that could not be easily seen was left in a state of ragged disrepair.

The most savage of this type of criticism is saved for Pudong. Here the fixation on face, it is argued, has produced an urban district that seems to lack all the conveniences and vibrancy that is so crucial to the creation of a successful metropoli-

tan core. Urbanist Thomas Campella's bitter attack on Lujiazui is one that is widely shared:

> What appears so definitely urban from afar – as a skyline – is on foot not only dull but spatially unpleasant and even intimidating. In the end, Lujiazui is little more than a preening clutch of monuments lunging for the sky. This is the urbanism of naked ambition, if it urbanism at all. Here was an opportunity to build a model city, and what has come instead is photogenic monumentality – a stage set city intended to impress from a distance, from the bund, from the air, from the pages of a glossy magazine. Lujiazui is indeed a good place for architectural photography; its austere vistas are most of the time unencumbered by messy pedestrians, bicyclists or street vendors with their stacks of steaming buns (Campanella 2008: 81).

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Even before construction began, Pudong was being dismissed as a spectacle. In 1988 free-market economist Milton Friedman came to Shanghai for a conference organized by the Cato Institute on China and Economic Reform. During his visit, he was proudly shown early plans for the district. Yet, the dazzling ambition did not impress. Pudong, Friedman quipped is "not a manifestation of the market economy, but a statist monument for a dead pharaoh on the level of the pyramids" (quoted in Huang, 2008: 7). Over a decade later, when Pudong's astonishing transformation was well underway, *The Shanghai Star*, a local English language weekly, echoed the libertarian sentiment. Quoting a Hong Kong newspaper the magazine editorialized: "Through sheer chutzpah and public relations guile Shanghai's super-smooth politicians somehow dissuade foreign investors, leaders and even journalists from looking too closely at their fair city's facade... Shanghai is arguably a Potemkin village on a massive scale" (Shanghai Star, 2003).

Contemporary Shanghai's most searing critic, MIT economist Yasheng Huang shares this vision of a city that is cloaked in a deceptive layer of glamour and gloss. "Much of the admiration of Shanghai," writes Huang with an angry frustration, "is based on visual evidence" (Huang 2008: 176). Mocking the veneration of "foreign observers" who are too easily duped, Huang accuses Shanghai of being "the world's most successful Potemkin metropolis" (p. 231).

Huang's book *Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics*, dedicates an entire chapter to dissecting the truth behind Shanghai's shallow façade. The chapter, entitled "What is wrong with Shanghai" argues that the "dizzying rise of skyscrapers from the rice paddies of Pudong" are "both the sign and the culprit of what is structurally ailing the Chinese economy." Rather than the mark of success, they are "a glaring warning sign" of the fragility of a system that might one day collapse (Huang 2008: 231).

The substance of Huang's critique is an attack on what he calls the "Shanghai model of growth," which came to the fore in the 1990s. According to Huang, the Shanghai model is based on a high-speed urbanism that favors massive state

owned enterprise and giant multinational corporations. Its primary aim is the attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI) and its success is measured solely in a rising GDP. He contrasts this economic model with a vibrant bottom-up sector of small, private entrepreneurs from the countryside, which dominated China's initial wave of economic reform that took place throughout the 1980s. This more organic, rural entrepreneurship creates wealth for individuals not just for the State. It is these small private businesses, Huang argues, rather than the state led crony capitalism responsible for the spectacular rise of Shanghai, that is the real force behind China's economic miracle. Reviewing Huang's book, *The Economist* magazine sums up the argument as follows: Huang "has discovered two Chinas: one, from not so long ago, vibrant, entrepreneurial and rural; the other, today's China, urban and controlled by the state" (The Economist 2008).

Huang is a careful researcher and provides plenty of data to back up his claims. Yet, perhaps the separation between these "two Chinas" is not as neat as he suggests. China, after all, is currently in the grip of a mass wave of urbanization, the biggest the world has ever seen. The rural entrepreneurs that once revolutionized village life are now seeking their fortunes on the city streets. Shanghai's dynamic rise rests not only on the spectacular projects of a state led urbanism, but also on the vibrancy of the life and culture of these migrant workers. Outside the hypermodern gloss of new roads and skyscrapers, there is a thriving micro-commercial culture – made up primarily of migrants from the countryside – which constitutes a flourishing informal economy that infiltrates the urban core. Moreover, as the "dragon-head" of the Yangtze River Delta Shanghai is intimately connected with the entrepreneurship of the region Huang celebrates most. What, after all, is the urban gloss of Shanghai, if not a shop window for the back alley factories of Zhejiang?

The notion of a Potemkin village stems from Russian minister Grigory Potemkin, who is said to have constructed elaborate fake villages in order to fool Catherine the Great on her tours of Crimea in the 18th century. In modern times, the idea has come to imply a stage set, a show that is designed to mislead. Those clever enough to see past the pretense will discover a pitiful reality that must be shamefully disguised. In Shanghai, however the glittering artifice is not just meant to deceive. Rather it is embraced as a show, a global attraction that – at least when conceived in this manner – need not interfere with the messy, vibrant entrepreneurial culture that continues to power the everyday life and culture of the street.

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It is possible, then, to understand Huang's divide between "two China's" not in terms of time (the 1980s versus the 1990s),[6] nor in terms of space (cities versus the countryside), but rather as an abstract distinction between two different economic orders that operate simultaneously in the city. This formulation is derived

from the historian Fernand Braudel,[7] most famous for his monumental 3-volume history of capitalism. The fundamental conclusion of this epic work is that there is, to use Braudel's words, a "dialectic, still very much alive, between capitalism on one hand, and its antithesis, the 'non-capitalism' of the lower level on the other. Capitalism as distinct from the market economy, is for me," he writes, "the essential message of this long quest" (Braudel 1992b: 620).

Throughout his historical analysis, Braudel shows that these two economic realms – a higher-level capitalist order, consisting of monopolies and large corporations and a substratum of market activity – have both been at work since as far back as the thirteenth century. Braudel identifies the mega-institutions of the higher level by their "high-intensity capitalist endeavor; the privileges they are granted by the state; and their appropriation of whole sectors of overseas trade" (Braudel 1992a: 443) Yet, while this more centralized and organized economic order has always been more visible, its secret is the strength it draws from the markets, which continually exist underneath and alongside it. Braudel repeatedly draws attention to "the enormous creative powers of the market, of the lower storey of exchange..."

> [This] lowest level, not being paralyzed by the size of its plant or organization, is the one readiest to adapt; it is the seed bed of inspiration, improvisation and even innovation, although its most brilliant discoveries sooner or later fall into the hands of the holders of capital. It was not the capitalists who brought about the first cotton revolution; all the new ideas came from enterprising small businesses" (Braudel 1992b: 631).

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Walk through Shanghai's streets and alleys exploring the plethora of street vendors with their mobile carts selling everything from stockings and fresh vegetables, to houseplants and pirated DVDs and it soon becomes clear that the city's spectacle exists only on the surface. The attention to glossy façade, massive state owned corporations, concentration on FDI, and support of monumental urbanism co-exists everywhere – just as Braudel suggests – with a lower level, bottom up, thriving market activity that constitutes life in Shanghai's streets and alleyways.

The ongoing interaction between these two layers – or economic orders – is of fundamental importance to Shanghai's future. How is their relationship to be conceived? Are they poised on the brink of battle? At times it appears so. On one side, a monumental urbanism attempts to crush the micro-entrepreneurs that are helping to power China's growth. Deemed messy, unsightly, and uncivilized this organic street culture is continuously subject to the attempts to stamp it out and sweep it away. On the other side, the country's "ongoing bottom-up transformation" – to borrow a term from theorist Kate Zhou (2009) – bubbles up, gathering strength, waiting to overthrow the top down planners responsible for the

"Shanghai model of growth." Yet, in the rhythms of everyday life in the city, it is possible to catch a glimpse of another more murky type of interrelationship that, were it allowed to exist, could help define a Shanghai futurism in which the gloss of urban spectacle could coexist with an emergent, micro-commercial and out of control culture that thrives in the shadows.

On the streets of Shanghai, this tension, between freedom and control manifests itself in daily clashes that occur between the *chengguan* (the city inspectors) and street vendors. Though the *chengguan* are not official government employees, they are tasked with keeping the streets clean and have the right to chase off vendors and seize their money and goods. At times this unofficial policing becomes horribly violent – the *chengguan* are generally made up of unemployed state owned workers and have a reputation for thuggery. Charged with maintaining the Shanghai spectacle, *chengguan* have beaten – even to the point of brain damage – migrant entrepreneurs. Outrage over their brutality has resulted in more than one urban riot.[8]

Nevertheless, there are zones of the city where a workable compromise between city inspectors and street vendors seems to have been reached. In these places the vendors have been working the same spot for many years and have developed relationships with the area's *chengguan*. When the inspectors are on duty (their daily schedule is no secret) the vendors disappear – or at least move off to one side. Their "face" preserved and their duty done, the inspectors happily go off to eat or rest. As soon as they leave the vendors return to their spots. This type of give and take, say one thing, do another, relationship is a vital component of the contemporary Chinese city. Anyone familiar with Shanghai will immediately recognize this type of compromise. In China, goes another saying, "green light means go, yellow light means speed up and red light means find another way around." In these kinds of "arrangements with Chinese characteristics" the concept of spectacle is key.

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China loves a good show. It famously invented gunpowder but rather than use it as deadly ammunition, it created grandiose firework displays. This deep respect for pageantry is apparent in the Forbidden City, headquarters of China's imperial power, whose intricate layering, ensures that every visitor participate in an elaborate theatrical performance. The Chinese skill at staging such performances was revealed to the world in the astonishing opening ceremony of the 2008 Olympics. A year later, in 2009 celebrations for the 60-year anniversary of the Communist Party occurred under a sunny blue sky. This did not happen naturally. The party manipulated the weather for the event. In China it is no secret that these spectacles are choreographed. That the Olympic fireworks were photoshopped for TV, that pretty smiling girls were brought in for the opening, or that the clouds were seed-

ed for the Party's grand parade should come as no surprise. Here illusion has long functioned as a crucial currency of power. You only have to visit the great wall to realize that China's greatest monument was built more as a symbol than for any functional purpose. This profound attention to exteriority and façade attains an intensely personal expression in the Chinese concept of "face." To lose face, in this shame-based culture, is itself a devastating failure and thus functions, for both children and adults, as an enormously powerful mechanism for behavioral control. In China, it is recognized, spectacle works.

In the case of Shanghai, and, especially Pudong, this is blatantly obvious. Shanghai may be built on hype, but the hype has produced some very real results. The power of PR, Kris Olds tells us, was evident as soon as Pudong planners launched the international competition for the development of Lujiazui. "The identity of the district was transformed immediately from a former industrial and residential zone, into a high-tech city set to rise out of Shanghai's shadow" (Olds 1997: 120). "Before the start of the Pudong development, concurs' researcher Yawei Chen, "Shanghai was an unattractive place to invest, notorious for its rigidity, bureaucracy and red tape. Within 15 years all that changed" (Chen 2007: 284)

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The Western philosophical tradition has a deep-rooted animosity to spectacle. This ancient and foundational hostility is captured by Plato's famous image of the cave, which tragically likens our existence to prisoners who are forced to spend their lives gazing at shadows that are projected on the wall. The prisoners, forgetting what they once knew of the outside world, are fooled into mistaking the illusion for reality. In Plato's parable one prisoner manages to escape and makes his way out of the cave. Slowly – after his eyes painfully adjust to the light – he sees the truth of the world illuminated by the brightness of the sun. With the truth revealed he returns to his friends, the prisoners, who reject his story of escape as a lie. The philosopher king – our hero – presses on. The shadows must be eliminated. The spectacle must be penetrated. All that is true and good must be brought to the light.

China has an altogether different outlook on the spectacular. It does not condemn illusion in the same way. One of most famous Taoist fables from the Zhuangzi tells of a man who dreams of a butterfly. When he suddenly awakes he finds himself again a man. In the end, the story teaches, we do not know whether it is the man dreaming the butterfly or the butterfly dreaming the man. Western thought encounters the idea that the world may have the character of a dream as the terror of epistemological uncertainty.[9] Renee Descartes, faced with a similar thought, recoiled in horror. His subsequent quest for certainty eventually formed the foundation for modern Western thought. The Zhuangzi is far more comfortable with the coexistence of the dreamer and the dreamed. To the Taoist both are

equally real, equally authentic, equally valid. "There must be some distinction between Zhou and a butterfly!" says the Zhuangzi, "This is called the transformation of things".

This acceptance of spectacle is rooted in a philosophical tradition that, unlike the West, does not associate brightness with truth and darkness with the falsity of illusion. One of China's oldest classical texts – and one of few books to have survived the Qin Emperor's great book burning in the 3rd century BC – is the Yijing. At the heart of the Yijing is a divinatory system made up of 64 hexagrams that are composed of multiple variations of broken and unbroken lines. The lines represent the yin/yang dualism that is at the foundation of Chinese thought. Originally and literally yin and yang denote the shady and sunny side of a mountain. Over time these principles accrued deeper significance. The Yijing, writes scholar Wonsuk Chang, "depicts contrasting forces through a variety of terms relevant to different situations":

> rest (jing) and movement (dong), softness (rou) and firmness (gang), within form (qi) and above form (dao), receptivity (kun) and creativity (qian), completion (zheng) and beginning (shi), simplicity(jian) and easiness (yi), progression (jin) and regression (tui), darkness (yu) and brightness (ming), ghosts or dissemination (gui) and spirits or stretching (shen), wisdom (zhi) and benevolence (ren), cold (han) and hot (shu), hidden (cang) and disclosing (xian), and enlarging life (dasheng) and broadening life (guangsheng). (Wonsuk 2009: 222)

According to Chinese philosophy, yin and yang emerge together out of primordial emptiness. They are interconnected and give rise to each other. The world is produced through their constant rotation of shadow and light. Time itself, the Yijing teaches, is governed by this constant shifting change.

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The fundamental dualism of shadow and light manifests itself in contemporary Chinese society in a number of ways. One of its most profound expressions is in the thin line that separates the Chinese government from the Communist Party. This dualism is essential to the structure of the State. In China today the government and other state organs perform on the front stage, creating an outward spectacle. Behind the scenes, the Party rules. In China, every segment of the public realm – the military, the state owned companies, each and every layer of government – is intricately shadowed by the Party, which stealthily remains out of sight. "It is backstage, in the party forums," writes journalist Richard McGregor "where the real stuff of politics is transacted" (McGregor 2010: 15). This concealment of the Party is the key insight of McGregor's bestselling book. The theme is introduced in the preface. "The problem in writing about the Party," McGregor confesses, "is that, as much as the Party might be staring you in the face, you can't easily gaze back… Sometimes, you can't see the Party at all" (McGregor 2010: xvii). Throughout the book this idea of the Party dominating the country from the

shadows forms an ongoing motif. “The Party is the grand puppeteer” (McGregor 2010: 48). McGregor quotes one businessman working in the state owned sector as saying. It is “like a phantom” echoes a lawyer from Beijing (McGregor 2010: 22). The best analogy, though, comes from a professor in Beijing “the party is like God. He is everywhere. You just can’t see him.” (McGregor 2010: 1)

Liberals in China attack this lack of transparency as the dark-side of China’s recent reforms.[10] When a secret sub-sector of society has hidden access both to great power and to great wealth the inevitable result is corruption. The concealment of the party, they contend, has created a mafia state run off crony capitalism.[11] Hope for the future rest on the forces of openness – globalization and cyberspace – that will eventually force light on this hidden realm. To these critics, there is something inherently dishonest, and morally suspect in a city that so delights in pure show. It is no doubt true that the dualism of luminosity and shade that exists in Shanghai allows for nefarious dealings, and the growth of a power that is corrupt and unchecked. Yet, there is also a certain liberty in the acceptance that there is life in the shadows that does not need to be brought to light. The darkness provides space and freedom (if not power) not only for those at the top of society, but also for those at the bottom. The Shanghai spectacle, with its concentration on the surface, can, at least sometimes, produce toleration for the messy markets that thrive alongside and underneath the spectacular skyline.

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In the lead up to expo, a widely publicized anti-piracy campaign led to a frenzy of reconstruction inside the cities DVD stores. Proprietors well versed in the customs of face, converted the front of their stores into legitimate businesses – some sold sweaters and bags, others stocked their shelves with the few legitimate DVDs that are available inside the country (mostly Chinese movies and films from Hollywood’s classical age). Behind this front they all installed fake doors. Customers looking for illicit goods were ushered in to the back where the real goods were being sold. Though some of these stores were busted,[12] the deception was hardly a secret. Instead, it was a clever arrangement serving a multiplicity of interests. Officials didn’t have to lose face from the flagrant piracy in the city, businesses didn’t have to shut down and customers could continue watching movies. The day Expo ended all the DVD stores in the city closed for renovation. The fake walls and doors were taken down and business as usual resumed.

These types of arrangements – so strange to Western eyes – are what allow Shanghai’s spectacle to co-exist with its street life. When spectacle is contained, relegated to its place, the Potemkin village ceases to be a shameful disguise. Instead, it enables a productive dualism that can awe and attract whilst still allowing for the flourishing existence of a hidden realm. This gray or shadow economy – so vital to Shanghai’s rise – is thus supported by the blindness that comes from all

the urban gloss. It cannot function if all is brought to light. Critics should remember that to insist on penetrating the surface, to hope for face-to-face confrontation, runs the danger of destroying all that needs the darkness to survive.

The best way to see Pudong is to ascend one of its super tall towers. Chose a skyscraper and take an elevator to the top. Turn your gaze away from the alien city-scape growing on the other side of the river and look down on Pudong. The highrise towers are all clustered around the rivers edge and along Century Avenue, the districts central axis. Off these main strips are rows and rows of 5 to 6 story white box apartment buildings all with red or blue roofs, a sim-city labyrinth that stretches on for miles. The only way to explore them is at street level. Back down on the ground, turn off the main boulevards and walk a block or even less. The landscape is still dominated by the towers but here, hidden from sight, an altogether different urban fabric emerges. The apartment blocks are all housing communities built 20, 30 even 60 years ago. In and around them are the small streets that everywhere support life in the 21st century Asian metropolis. The roads – no longer super-wide empty boulevards – are lined with micro businesses, small restaurants selling *xiaolongbao* – Shanghai's famous special dumplings, noodles and breakfast *bings*. Inside a warehouse, at the back of an alley is the wet market with fresh fruit and vegetables that are biked in from the farms just out of town. These occupy colorful stands that sit alongside the buckets of slithering snakes and sacks somnolent toads. Inside the tenement alleyways residents sit on lawn chairs shelling peas, playing cards, drinking tea. Though still in the heart of Lujiazui, the glamour and gloss seem far, far away. Here, just 5 minutes away from the city's most momentous spectacle are the small neighborhoods and communities that exist not for show, but for the people who live in them. Most visitors, taken in by the façade, do not bother to come here. These side streets are kept backstage. They are not part of the main display. Yet, sometimes, due to their tight proximity, their influence seeps through. Back on Century Avenue an electronic sound-scape fills the air, the source is a migrant vendor that has rigged up his bike with a makeshift sound system. He is using his ad-hoc mobile stereo to advertise his wares, a suitcase stuffed with pirated CDs.

Anna Greenspan teaches philosophy and urbanization at New York University Shanghai. She is the co-director of the Institute of Shanghai Studies and is writing a book on Shanghai futurism. Anna maintains a website at www.wakinggiants.net. E-mail: annagreenspan@gmail.com

Notes

[1] This image can be found in multiple locations. Here is one: http://twistedsifter.com/2011/01/picture-of-the-day-shanghai-1990-vs-2010/

[2] The Jingpai (Beijing culture), Haipai (Shanghai culture) debate has been extends back over a year. For more see Lynn Pan. *Shanghai Style: Art and Design Between the War*, Long River Press (2008).

[3] One branding expert told me that the cost of a luxury brand operating a store in a mall on Nanjing road is almost the same as having a giant banner ad. The empty stores, therefore, make sense purely from an advertising perspective.

[4] The attempt to create a more civilized city for Shanghai's World Expo 2010 involved a campaign to stop people from wearing pajamas on the street (a local habit). This provoked an interesting backlash from people who argued that outdoor pajama wearing was a vital part of Shanghai culture. See Gao Yubing The Pajama Game Closes in Shanghai. *New York Times* (May 16, 2010) http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/17/opinion/17gao.html

[5] The destruction wrought by spectacle can be seen, for example on Wujiang Lu, which used to be one of the best places in the city for street food and is now filled with fast food chains.

[6] This is not to question Huang's argument. Undoubtedly China implemented economic policies that were friendly to the private entrepreneur in the 80s that were later reversed in the 1990s

[7] This aspect of Braudel's work has been taken up more recently by materialist philosophers inspired by the work produced by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. See especially Manuel Delanda. "Markets, Antimarkets and Network Economics." http://www.cddc.vt.edu/host/delanda/pages/markets.htm

[8] A sampling of stories on chengguang, violence and urban unrest can be found here: http://www.economist.com/node/15806697?story_id=E1_TVRDGGJS; http://shanghaiist.com/2011/04/14/showdown_between_police_and_crowds.ph

[9] Drawing on the ancient commentary of Guo Xiang (AD 252-312) Hans-Georg Moeller argues that common translations of the butterfly dream misread the fable and give it a Western interpretation by adding in a constant subject -- the 'I', who dreams, remembers and doubts. See Hans-Georg Moeller "Zhuangzi's Dream of the Butterfly—a Daoist interpretation." *Philosophy East and West*. Volume 49, Number 4 (Oct 1999).

[10] For more on China's contemporary liberal theorists see *One China. Many Paths*. Edited by Chaohua Wang. Verso (2005).

[11] On China as a mafia state see http://shanghaiist.com/2011/04/17/john_garnaut_is_china_becoming_a_ma.php

[12] Expo brought an end to the great hub of DVD stores on Dagu Lu, though at least one of these has simply moved around the corner.

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Queering/Querying Cosmopolitanism: Queer Spaces in Shanghai

By Hongwei Bao

Abstract

This article examines different types of queer spaces in contemporary Shanghai together with the various same-sex subjects that inhabit these spaces. In doing so, it discusses the impact of transnational capitalism, the nation state and local histories on the construction of urban spaces and identities. Combining queer studies and urban ethnography, this article points to the increasing social inequalities hidden behind the notion of urban cosmopolitanism created by the deterritorializing and meanwhile territorializing forces of transnational capital and the state. It also sheds light on how these various identities and spaces are lived and experienced by ordinary people, as well as possible ways of resistance to the dominant narratives.

Keywords: Cosmopolitanism, Shanghai, queer space, gay, *tongzhi*

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Introduction

> Shanghai appears to be run by youth, staffed by youth, and patronised by youth. The population now exceeds 20 million … Nearly every gay you meet in China says they want to live here. The nightlife is constantly reinventing itself, but many venues have found consistent patronage from young, professional locals and expats. Shanghai has come to rival Hong Kong as the gay centre of China as the winds of freedom continue to blow. (Utopia Asia 2009)

> In the not terribly distant future, we'll be talking about the Shanghai club scene the way we discuss Sydney, London, San Francisco, or any other major international destination. It's a matter of when, not if. (Collins 2009)

Shanghai has recently become known as the gay capital of China. *The Independent* lists Shanghai as one of the world's five most improved cities for gay tolerance (2008).[1] Utopia-Asia.com, a lesbian, gay, bi-and transsexual (LGBT) web portal in Asia, claims that every gay man in China wants to live in Shanghai. Fudan University in Shanghai is the first university in mainland China to offer courses in gay studies (Gao 2006).[2] *China Daily* celebrated Shanghai as 'one of the most open and progressive Chinese cities' following the success of the 2009 LGBT Pride Week. This celebration also strengthened this image of Shanghai as a gay metropolis. In a week-long period from June 7 to 14, 2009, Shanghai celebrated what its organisers called 'China's first LGBT festival', with parties, performances, film screenings, art exhibitions, panel discussions, BBQs, and 'gay weddings'.[3] Although the event organisers, mostly foreign expatriates working in Shanghai, claim that this is China's first-ever LGBT festival, others, mainly Chinese lesbians and gays, argue that this claim is no more than a strategy for publicity. Since the 1990s, LGBT activists in Beijing and other parts of China have launched various campaigns which may be called 'LGBT festivals'. However, one interviewee who works for a local LGBT NGO said that the event organisers of the Shanghai Pride know better how to do PR (public relations) than their Chinese counterparts. The disagreements and clashes between local Chinese LGBT individuals and organisations and international expats based in Shanghai are well worth our attention, as they remind us of the heterogeneity of LGBT communities and identities in China. They have an impact on the construction of different queer spaces and identities in Shanghai.

More than one thousand beautifully-dressed gays and lesbians, both locals and foreign expatriates, together with tourists, packed the festival venues on Pride Day. The event attracted wide media coverage, including the BBC, *New York Times*, *Newsweek* and *China Daily*. Although government intervention forced the organisers to cancel a few events, including one film screening, one theatre performance, and one social mixer, the Pride Week was still considered a great success. Despite the cautiousness of Chinese-language newspapers in reporting the event, *China Daily*, China's national English newspaper, commented that:

> Shanghai Pride 2009 should be a source of great encouragement to the tens of millions of 'comrades', as homosexual men and women are called in the Chinese mainland. Meanwhile, the festival, though bereft of the massive street parade that is a

> feature of gay and lesbian festivals elsewhere, is also sending a strong signal to the 1.3 billion Chinese about greater acceptance and tolerance. (China Daily 2009)

The purpose of my fieldwork in Shanghai from 2008 to 2009 was twofold: first, to find out whether people, especially those within Shanghai's LGBT communities, think of Shanghai as a 'gay city'; second, to examine what types of 'queer spaces' are available for LGBT people in Shanghai and how they are related to particular constructions of gay identity. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre (1991) and Michel Foucault (1978, 1986), I also aim to delineate the complex relation between identity construction and spatial formation evident in the queer spaces of Shanghai. Besides, I will discuss how queer culture in Shanghai is configured within the abovementioned debates..

Queer Spaces and Imagined Cosmopolitanism

Queer space, in Ira Tattleman's words, involves

> the construction of a parallel world, one filled with possibility and pleasure, while functioning simultaneously as an intervention in the world of dominant culture. […] Queer space provides an alternative means of worldly inhabitation, makes visible the already in-place hierarchies, and embraces the reciprocity of space and sexual identity. In its place of opportunity, we are free to construct ourselves in flexible, unspecified, and unpredictable ways. (Tattleman 2000: 223-224)

Tattleman seems to be very optimistic about the new possibilities that queer space brings about. I, however, wish to emphasise the point that queer space 'makes visible the already in-place hierarchies' (Tattleman 2000: 224).

Like Binne and Skeggs, I wish to point out the issue of class in the production of queer spaces: 'behind and within the articulation and desire for the fluidity of identity associated with the use of the term cosmopolitan, the rigidity of class and lesbian and gay identity are produced' (Binne & Skeggs 2006: 221). They further emphasise the issue of class in such articulations: 'class entitlement plays a major role in articulating and enabling who can be included and excluded from this space.' (p. 221)

The two epigraphs to this article, despite their differences, demonstrate the central role that sexuality plays in constructing an 'imagination' of cosmopolitanism, both for Shanghai and for China, both by foreign visitors and by the Chinese who live in the city. Cosmopolitanism has been a contested concept in academic discussions in recent years (Brennan 1997; Yang 1997; Robbins et al. 1998; Schein 1999; Beck 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2007; Appiah 2006; Binnie 2006; Morgan & Banham 2007; Rofel 2007; Donald et al. 2009; Harvey 2009). It is understood both as a philosophy of world citizenship which transcends state boundaries and a term for people's skills and attitudes towards diversity and difference (Binnie & Skeggs 2006: 13). In this article, I deploy the concept of 'imagined cosmopolitanism' developed by anthropologist Louisa Schein (1999), who in turn draws on Benedict Anderson (1983) to highlight the ways in which cosmopolitanism works

as a social imaginary shared by people who may never have met each other but who embrace a common sense of belonging and aspiration:

> Imagined Cosmopolitanism, then, is about conceiving a tauntingly chimeric world of spatial, class, gender, and race mobility, where State borders and economic exclusions cease to be intransigent constraints. … At the same time, it is fundamentally about the endurance of immobility. (Schein 1999: 223-224)

That this sense of commonality is imagined does not necessarily render the feeling of being cosmopolitan less real. Admittedly, imaginations have performative dimensions and are often translated into social realities through people's lived experiences.

Schein observes that people in post-socialist China produce individualities (which they often believe should break away from socialist collectivism) in innovative ways including by participating in practices of consumption. Such participation is not, however, equally available to every member of the society in the same way. Schein stresses that it is important to 'put some inequalities back into the picture':

> Assuming a state of generalised yearning, then, does not presume that all who crave goods are equally driven to produce distinct selves through acquisition. Just as the structures of feeling around transnational commodity desire differ in each historical moment, so too is the political-economic context for those desires highly divergent. (Schein 1999: 369)

Certainly people from different social backgrounds may imagine cosmopolitanism in divergent ways according to their socio-economic constraints. It is also necessary to be aware of the potential risk of structural determinism in Schein's argument. Indeed, we should caution against both a deterministic and a voluntaristic reading of 'imagined cosmopolitanism'. It is useful to bear in mind that such imaginations— in line, also, with the Bourdeuian notion of 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1984) —are the effect of interplay between individual and social structures.

Schein's focus on consumption risks obscuring the importance of the nation state in shaping such dispositions. Mayfair Mei-Hui Yang (1997) brings our attention to the divergence of interests between the nation and the state and to the role of mass media in 'deterritorialising' people's desires. For example, Lisa Rofel (1999, 2007) highlights the central role that gender and sexuality play in imagining 'other modernities' and a 'desiring China'.

Ulrich Beck (2007) defines cosmopolitanism as the 'erosion of distinct boundaries and the emergence of internal globalisation or dissolution of the nation state in which the "us" and "them" of social identities is constructed less negatively'.[4] His vision seems extremely utopian. Certainly, the power of the nation state in constructing sex and sexuality has not diminished. Apart from a heightened sense of national identity ('Chineseness'), gays and lesbians in Shanghai also subscribe to a distinct local identity ('Shanghaineseness'). People I interviewed seem to agree that there is not only a cultural specificity attached to the Chinese *tongzhi*

identity, which differs greatly from Western 'gay', but a cultural specificity that is attached to regional cultural differences.

People often attribute two characteristics to LGBT culture in Shanghai. First, gays and lesbians in Shanghai know how to take care of themselves and how to enjoy life. As Eddy, the boss of *Eddy's Bar*, explained, gay people in Shanghai 'know how to take care of their bodies and the importance of going to sleep early'. If consumption constructs one aspect of local gay identity, pragmatism is another characteristic of Shanghai gay culture frequently contrasted with the 'irrationality' of LGBT people in other cities:

> In Beijing, they're much more open and passionate about it. They go with the flow and then pay the consequences. Here, in typical Shanghai style, everyone is always calculating. They're always thinking of the consequences of their actions. If you go to a disco in Dalian [in northeastern China's Liaoning province], when the hip music goes on, everyone heads for the dance floor. In Beijing, half the people do and in Shanghai, no one does, then suddenly someone saunters up there. (Yatsko 2003: 206)

This 'rationality' can be understood using the capitalist logic of production and consumption, as Max Weber (1976) points out. The widely acknowledged image of Shanghainese pragmatism and sophistication is closly tied to Shanghai's role as the capital of finance and commercialisation in China (Lee 1999; Wasserstrom 2009). Therefore, it is understandable that Beijing and Shanghai, are imagined in different ways: 'Beijing as a space for performing identity, and Shanghai as a space to be consumed' (Visser 2010: 21). One gay Chinese-American who lived in both Shanghai and Beijing, claimed that Shanghainese rationality is more 'modern' than the unsophisticated folks in other parts of China. Popular jokes have it that Shanghainese consider people from other parts of the country 'country bumpkins' (*xiangbalao*). Shanghai's gay identity bears the imprint of this self-identified cultural superiority brought about by their experience with colonialism and capitalism in the twentieth century.

While I do not think that the generalisations with which my respondents work are necessarily accurate, I am interested in why people subscribe to such distinctions. I can sense the impact here of a rising cultural nationalism in modern and contemporary China that has constructed a new version of the China/West binary, along with the ambivalent antagonism embedded in such a dichotomy. It also reflects a strong sense of locality tied to regional differences within China, a legacy which derives from the past. The household registration system (*hukou*) has, to a great extent, constructed a heightened sense of local identity. *Hukou* gives each person an identity that is tied up to geographical location. Where one comes from becomes an enduring marker of one's identity in China.[5] The uneven regional and local development has reinforced this sense of differences.

It also sheds interesting light on why people subscribe to such regional and local differences within gay culture, and what state policies may mean to ordinary people's lived experiences, feelings and emotions, including in gay culture. In-

deed, identities not only provide people with a sense of belonging, they may also serve as a type of politics which constitutes people's daily experiences. As state policy makes local identities possible, local people also utilise these identities to resist and to subvert the state discourses.

Cosmopolitanism as a social utopia also coincides with growing social inequalities manifested in urban spaces. In their study of the production and consumption of cosmopolitan space in Manchester's Gay Village, Jon Binnie and Beverley Skeggs (2006) call for a reconsideration of social inequalities within cosmopolitanism and highlight the intersection of sex and class. Like Manchester, queer cosmopolitanism in Shanghai is fraught with hopes and despairs, tensions and precariousness, with its evident racial and class politics as well as its reference to an urban/rural divide. As Bruce Robbins (1998) cautions, cosmopolitanism should not be considered as a utopian world of universal love and mutual understanding, instead it points to a domain of contested politics. Similarly, as Rofel (2007), Schein (1999) and Yang (1997) point out, the imagination of cosmopolitanism in China remains closely tied up to both global capitalism and neoliberalism. The ability to negotiate cosmopolitanism is certainly classed, raced, gendered and sexed. These disparities are manifest in the different queer spaces in Shanghai that I will discuss below.

Sex and the City: Queering Shanghai's Cityscape

Shanghai has always been imagined as a gendered and sexualised city in popular cultural representations: for many Shanghai's twentieth-century modernity was embodied in women and prostitutes (Hershatter 1997; Lee 1999; Wang 2007). The city was simultaneously called the 'Paris of the Orient' and 'whore of the Orient' in the colonial era (Yatsko 2003). The experiences and passions of foreign expatriates, tourists, compradors, literati, women, and prostitutes made the city extremely 'sexually attractive' in the 1920s and 30s (Lee 1999). After 1949, the communist regime transformed Shanghai into an industrial city and a city with 'grand revolutionary traditions'. Prostitutes and homosexuals, who used to hallmark the city's cosmopolitanism, were forced to transform themselves into socialist subjects at the beginning of the Maoist era. This was reversed by the 'Reform and Opening-Up' since the 70s (Farrer 2002). A booming sex industry and a vibrant youth culture have returned to the city. It stands at the forefront of 'imagined cosmopolitan' and, as Rofel (2007) puts it, a 'desiring China'.

Gay spaces in Shanghai have undergone significant changes in the past three decades. According to Lee San, a local gay man whom I interviewed during my fieldwork and who lived through the changes of Shanghai's gay scene in the past decades, Shanghai's gay public space started in the 1970s and 80s with scattered 'beats' (*dian'er*), or cruising places such as parks, river banks and public toilets. One of the earliest meeting places for gay people, according to him, was the small

roadside park at Hankou Road. Together with its adjacent areas, including the Bund and the banks of the Suzhou River, this part of town was called 'the Golden Triangle' (*jin sanjiao*) by local gay people. In a popular online lesbian story titled *Past Things in Shanghai* (*shanghai wangshi*), Zhang Haoyin (2003) recalls:

> The Bund is a strange place. She [referring to the Bund] is always changing. In the 1980s, there was the 'lovers' wall' (*qinglü qiang*). [The place was so busy that] sometimes people had to pay in order to secure a place here. There were also jobless young people who hang out there. Later, together with the newsstand at Fuzhou Road, the Bund formed a 'homosexual triangle' (*tongxinglian zhijiao*). You could often see single handsome young men standing there and looking around, or several young people flirting and laughing together. There was inexhaustible energy in them.[6]

In recent years, shopping centres, restaurants, cafes and bars have been popular meeting places for relatively well-off young gay people in Shanghai. The density of population in these public spaces makes it relatively safe for LGBT people to meet. Apparently, the risk of encountering thieves, robbers and 'money boys' (male prostitutes) has been a continuing concern for gay people who visit public queer spaces. These commercial queer spaces are also often places for publicly representing, and thus often symbolise, fashion, lifestyle and class distinction. In my interviews with LGBT people in Shanghai, many people choose meet me at Starbucks. One interviewee explained to me that cafes and bars have a 'petit bourgeois ambience' (*xiaozi qingdiao*). The common phrases 'petit bourgeois ambience' and 'middle-class lifestyle' bespeaks young people's understanding of cosmopolitanism as deeply intertwined with class, and the desire of belonging to certain classes.

My local gay guide Lee San explained that the self-identified gay bars and clubs began to appear in Shanghai in the early 1990s. *Eddy's* and *Erdingmu* were among the first pink bars in Shanghai. They shifted their locations many times and were closed several times for various reasons.[7] More bars mushroomed in the late 1990s, together with numerous clubs *(huisuo)*, saunas, hair salons, and massage parlours. Many of these commercial venues are located west of the Huangpu River and inside the main city centre or districts such as Jing'an, Luwan, Huangpu, and Xuhui. Their geographical locations become a dominant factor in attracting different groups of clientele. Generally speaking, commercial venues in the inner city areas are more attractive to international and middle-class customers, whereas venues in less favourably-located districts, such as Yangpu and Hongkou, cater mostly to working-class and migrant customers. This brief introduction to Shanghai's erotic landscape calls for details and nuances. Although such an approach to Shanghai's local gay history may help people who are not familiar with the topic to grasp a broad picture of its background, the shortcomings of such a description will be demonstrated in the next few sections.

Gay bars and clubs in Shanghai should be understood both as transnational queer spaces and social spaces linked to homoeroticism in China's historical past.

Before 1949, urban queer spaces existed mainly in classical Chinese opera theatre (Sang 2003; Jiang 2009; Liang 2010). The theatrical space was where desire and money were exchanged, often between rich patrons and poor singers. Homoeroticism, considered an 'obsession' (*pi*), was widely practiced in that setting (Wu 2004; Kang 2009). The reform of opera theatres in 1949 changed the function and status of the theatre. The theatre becomes a formal location with little public personal desire exchanged between the performers and the audience. Instead, this social function is later transferred to pubs and clubs, where the exchange of money and desire usually takes place between performers and clients. These gay bars and clubs are not simply commercial and recreational spaces influenced by transnational practices; they are also new social spaces developed in connection with China's historical social spaces.[8]

At around the same time as this expansion of gay social spaces, the use of the Internet became more and more popular in the gay community. The internet has been the preferred way of dating for many gays and lesbians because of its anonymity and the ease of locating people through queer websites, compared to the difficulty and the risk involved in off-line dating. *Time* magazine noted in 2001 that what the Internet had done to Asia's gays and lesbians in five years equalled what the Stonewall had done in the West over a period of twenty-five years (Martin, et al. 2003: 2). This is certainly true to China. China's LGBT community 'pink paper' notes the important role that the internet plays in the construction of LGBT community in China. According to its statistics, there were more than 160 LGBT websites in China in July 2000. The number increased to 340 in June 2004. In 2006, there were more than 3,000 LGBT websites in the form of personal web pages or blogs. Boysky (*yangguang didai*), a gay community web portal, has a click rate of 70,000 times a day (Tong 2008: 177-178). The increasing popularity of LGBT websites in China contributes to new forms of sociality and community. Many people meet online first, followed by an offline meeting. They not only meet online through gay websites and QQ (a Chinese-language instant messenger) groups, but meet offline to have parties, play sports and engage in other community activities.[9] The online space and the offline space are increasingly intertwined.

Alongside this change, new forms of public gay organisation also appeared. With the increase of the public awareness of HIV/AIDS issues in China, more and more LGBT NGOs were set up by various international foundations and by the Chinese government.[10]. The Chinese government began to acknowledge the existence of LGBT groups and the importance of HIV/AIDS prevention in the late 1990s. Although the link between LGBT identities and public health discourse may contribute to the further stigmatisation of LGBT identities, an increasing number of LGBT NGOs were established with the help of transnational capital and the Chinese government (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) (He 2006; Jones 2007; Li 2004). Some of these NGOs are devoted to HIV/AIDS prevention; others are more interested in community building. China's LGBT NGOs

started from community hotline and newsletter in the late 1990s. The earliest LGBT NGOS include: the Beijing *Tongzhi* Hotline started in 1997 and the *Friend Exchange* (*pengyou tongxin*) community newsletter in 1998. After 2000, with Chinese government's recognition of the HIV/AIDS issue in China, more and more NGOs were founded. There were more than 120 LGBT NGOs in China in 2007 (Tong 2008: 248). The number has been increasing each year. Most of the NGOs were funded by international foundations such as the Ford Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Chi-Heng Foundation. Some were established by National Centre for Disease Control (CDC) affiliated with China's Ministry of Public Health, and they were often referred to as Government NGOs, or GoNGOs. Many NGOs and GoNGOs often compete against each other due to limited funding and limited community resources. At the National Conference on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Treatment among Men Who Have Sex with Men that I attended in November, 2008, the clash of interests among different NGOs became the spotlight of the conference.[11] Such phenomenon has often been described as *neihong* (internal struggle) or *butuanjie* (not being united) (Ho 2005).

There is no shortage of such LGBT NGOs in Shanghai. A gay man who works for an LGBT NGO told me that LGBT NGOs in Shanghai are 'better' than those in other cities, meaning that the NGOs in Shanghai are less antagonistic to each other. Shanghai's prominent position in transnational capitalism has contributed to its increasing significance in global biopolitics. Almost no philanthropic organisations will miss out Shanghai in their implementation of humanitarian programs in China. Each organisation in Shanghai has its clear range of responsibility and target groups, and hence their interests do not clash directly. He attributes this to the less political, less aggressive and more pragmatic personality of the Shanghainese, which I will address later. The financial support from international foundations competes intensely against the Chinese government's reassertion of its power over the LGBT community in China. The establishment of, and competition among, NGOs and GoNGOs would not have been possible without the cooperation and competition between transnational capitalism and the Chinese state.

In this process, a new social identity, 'Men Who Have Sex with Men' (*nannan xing xingwei renqun*), or MSM, has been constructed by the public health discourse. The English abbreviation of the term, MSM, has been widely used by the Chinese government and LGBT NGOs in HIV/AIDS prevention. Interestingly, not everyone in China speaks English and can articulate the term clearly. These slippages in mimicry bespeak the complex process of cultural translation and demonstrate the ambivalent agency of the non-Western cultures in globalisation (Bhabha 1994).

Transnational and Commercial Queer Spaces

Successful as the Shanghai LGBT Pride Week in June, 2009 was, careful observers are quick to point out that its organisers and participants are predominantly Western, white and middle class. The working language of the festival was a mixture of English and Chinese. The logos, banners, advertisements, and even the website of Pride Week were exclusively in English. The event organiser offered many reasons for this to the press. One of them is as a precaution against the Chinese government's possible intervention. Drawing on the lessons of failed LGBT cultural festivals and queer film festivals held in Beijing in the past few years, the organisers of the Shanghai Pride decided to limit publicity to an English-speaking audience.[12] Despite this precaution, the organisers were still warned by the police to limit the crowds, to keep the noise down, and were required to cancel some events.[13] However, negotiating with the Chinese state was not the only reason for organisers to use English for event publicity. The organiser, Shanghai LGBT Group, was established by foreign expatriates and the group's working language is English. They have an online yahoo group web page which publishes event information in English every week. These events include pub quizzes, scavenger hunts, bowling, dinners, wine tasting, and pub nights. Most of these events are not cheap for a local consumer. The high entrance fee for the festival also excluded many people: the inaugural dinner cost 150 RMB and the wine tasting party another 150 RMB. 'We welcome local participants,' an organiser explained to me. 'And we also want to make sure that the participants are within a manageable number and that they feel comfortable with each other'.

'Feeling comfortable' is less about the number of participants than about class. The correlation between cosmopolitanism and class becomes pertinent here. For some foreign expatriates, working in a big metropolis like Shanghai, witnessing the rapid changes of the city, experiencing the excitement that the vibrant city life offers, in addition to having some local Chinese friends, constitutes their cosmopolitan disposition. For their Chinese counterparts, being able to participate in the 'global gay' (Altman 1997) scene with their international friends is equally symbolic of their cosmopolitanism. In both cases, cosmopolitanism is a *habitus*, a certain disposition intrinsically related to certain social classes into which one is born and to which one belongs (Bourdieu 1984). Indeed to be gay is like having the 'sexual capital' which places one in certain social strata with certain material and imagined privileges. For example, many gay people in Shanghai feel that they are better positioned in Chinese society because they have more direct access to the international expatriate community in the city. One does not necessarily have to work in a foreign enterprise in order to meet people from other countries and cultures. The feeling of sharing the same sexual identity provides a sufficient reason for a local gay man to sit together with and to start a conversation with a Caucasian who comes from another part of the world. This makes some gay people in

Shanghai feel that they are more urban and cosmopolitan than gay people in other cities that have less knowledge about the West.

Apart from an imagined gay cosmopolitanism, being gay also establishes a set of hierarchies experienced as internal to gay culture. For Chinese gay men in Shanghai, the ability to communicate in English, having a group of international friends, reading local English newspapers such as *That's Shanghai* or *City Weekends*, going to the regular 'meet and greet' night on the last Thursday of each month at *Frangipani*, and enjoying a cocktail are the kind of activities that locate one within the Shanghai-based version of a 'global gay' scene. Needless to say, being this type of gay person does not come cheap, and not everyone is able to be gay in this way. Some local Shanghai gay men I interviewed remarked that they did not know about the LGBT Pride Week until it was over. Others expressed a lack of interest, stating that it was the 'foreigners' business' and not designed for the Chinese. The type of 'global gay' identity represented by the glamorous Shanghai LGBT Pride is as exclusive as it is inclusive.

On 12 December 2008, I attended a gay theatre première also organised by the Shanghai LGBT Group. Australian theatre producer and director Michael Darragh put on the British gay play *The Beautiful Thing* together with a group of foreign expatriates based in Shanghai. The play was performed in English, with a predominantly Caucasian cast and audience. To 'localise' the play, the director chose Derek Kwan, an Asian American who works in Shanghai, to perform the role of Ste. A small number of local participants in the audience were either fluent English speakers or came along with their Caucasian friends. Many of these also worked in foreign enterprises or joint ventures and many had studied or worked abroad. My interviews with them demonstrated that most of them were confident about the future of Shanghai. They cherished the work opportunities available in Shanghai and which, according to them, may not be available to those Chinese living abroad. They seem to have what Aihwa Ong refers to as 'flexible citizenship', grounded in

> the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions. In their quest to accumulate capital and social prestige in the global arena, subjects emphasize, and are regulated by, practices favouring flexibility, mobility, and repositioning in relation to markets, governments and cultural regimes. (1999: 6)

Ong correctly points out that the mechanism on which such 'flexible citizenship' relies is the transnational flow of capital, which has made the transnational flow of population possible. In an article on media and cosmopolitanism in Shanghai, Yang also discusses the 'deterritorialising' effect of transnational capitalism on the Chinese state (1997: 297-298), arguing that the stability and rigidity of state logic is challenged and undermined by the restless and fluid nature of capitalism. Quoting Deleuze and Guattari, Yang highlights the 'flows of desire that capitalism unleashes' (Yang 1997). Here the term 'desire' refers to a broad range of 'dreams,

longings and aspirations that the Chinese citizen embodied' (Rofel 2007: 25). However, I believe that the use of the term by Deleuze and Guattari has not sufficiently addressed sex and sexualities.

John D'Emillio (1997) has demonstrated that gay identity is a product of capitalism. This was echoed by Dennis Altman (2001), in his controversial book *Global Sex*, which observes the dissemination of gay identity from Euro-American West to other parts of the world. Although people tend to accuse Altman of being Eurocentric (or, rather, American-centric) (Martin 2008; Martin et al. 2003; Rofel 2007; Sullivan & Jackson 2001), there is some truth in his argument about the eroding forces of global capitalism and the new sexual subjectivities emerging in and beyond the nation state. Altman cautions against seeing these new sexual subjectivities as a replica of Western gay identity:

> Homosexuality becomes a particularly obvious measure of globalisation … Yet we must beware reading too much into these scripts. What is happening in Bangkok, Rio and Nairobi is the creation of new forms of understanding and regulating the sexual self, but it is unlikely that they will merely repeat those forms which were developed in the Atlantic world. (Altman 2001: 100)

If we only focus on the glamour of gay scenes in bars and clubs, we may well get the impression that the gay scene in Shanghai testifies to Altman's prophecy of 'global queering' (Altman 1996). At ten o'clock on a Saturday night, I find myself at 1877 *Huaihai Zhonglu* in the former French concession, *Eddy's*, one of the longest continually open gay bars in Shanghai. The bar has a world-class design, with red lighting, Chinese antiques, and modern art. The red lighting at the bar is designed to create an effect of ambiguity, connoting both sexual innuendo and political subversion. Most eye-catching are the paintings on the wall portraying the Maoist 'comrade', serving as both a pun and a parody of communist ideology. The crowd is a mixture of foreign expatriates and local Chinese. English seems to be the working language. The bartender is busy but friendly. One glass of beer, Budweiser or Corona, costs 30 to 40 RMB. The DJ is playing trendy music mixed with a global flavour, but not loud enough to disturb conversations. Men in tight T-shirts and jeans show off their well-toned bodies. The Chinese gay men here are mostly in their 20s or 30s and they are young, relatively well-off and very confident. They proudly command both economic and cultural capital and are active participants in the transnational gay scene. This might be anywhere in the world: London, Paris, Berlin, New York, or San Francisco. It seems in this place that Shanghai has become a very transnational and cosmopolitan city for gays and lesbians. The Chinese gay men at *Eddy's* also seem to have Ong's 'flexible citizenship'. Some work in international companies and travel to different parts of the world. They appear to negotiate their sexual identity and cultural identity with ease: their being gay is not apparently in contradiction with their being Chinese. It is a 'double consciousness' of being both Chinese and transnational that gives the gay scene in Shanghai a sense of exoticness to both Chinese and foreign residents and visitors.

Most of the people whom I met in events organised by Shanghai LGBT groups and at these commercial gay bars identified themselves as 'gay', as in the frequently-used phrase '*wo shi gay*' ('I am gay'). The English word is not often translated into Chinese even in a conversation in Chinese. It does not need to be. It both embraces a transnational and cosmopolitan identity and manifests a classical Chinese aesthetics of *hanxu* (implicitness or reticence), that is, one does not need to articulate it clearly, at least not in Chinese.[14] Code switching, in this context, is an indirect gesture of 'coming out': it suggests a move to 'moving out', but the 'coming out' is apparently limited to people who understand English, who have similar educational and class background. The English term 'gay' in this context can be considered both an 'out' strategy and a closet. Fran Martin discusses the dual, and ambivalent, meanings of 'coming out' politics in Taiwanese society in her book:

> I want to suggest that the pervasive practice of a particular way of representing homosexuality in contemporary Taiwan, one that inscribes '*tongxinglian*' as animated by an incessant movement between the poles of the hidden and the shown. Specifically, the discourse I am referring to tends to appeal to a dynamic alteration between the state of *yin* (concealment) and *xian* (disclosure), for example in such phrases as *yin er wei xian* (concealed and undisclosed) or *ru yin ruo xian* (now-concealed, now disclosed) which cluster particularly thickly around figurations of homosexuality. (Martin 2003: 189)

Such insight certainly holds true in mainland China. This discussion of the *yin*/*xian* dynamics is comparable to the Western gay identity politics discussed by Eve Sedgwick (1990). As Sedgwick argues in *Epistemology of the Closet*, homosexuality is closely related to several binary oppositions in Western popular culture, including secrecy and disclosure, as well as the public and the private. One has to be either 'closeted' or 'out'. 'Coming out' is encouraged in the gay identity politics in the West, as it is directly related to the notions of 'truth' and 'authenticity', two privileged terms in the modern episteme. The importance of seeing and visibility is also raised. This is similar to Martin's account which points to the complexities and nuances of the 'closet' and 'coming out' politics in the Chinese context, in which dichotomies such as out/in, visibility/ invisibility, and authenticity/ inauthenticity become blurred and contested. The only exception in the Chinese context is that concealment and disclosure do not point to the authenticity of one's identity. Rather, they are historically and socially contingent. Indeed, for many gays and lesbians in China, one does not need to be completely 'in' or 'out'. Being 'in' and 'out' depends on the particular social setting and on the person that they are with. When to conceal and when to disclose one's identity, together with to whom, becomes a matter of politics.

It is worth mentioning that such 'global gay' identities are also products of capitalist consumption, which break away from old forms of social relations, be they Confucian ties of family and kinship, or socialist collective identities. It seems that this 'global gay' identity is among the new identities that capitalism –

with that dissolution of fixed, fast-frozen relations evoked in Marx and Engles' Communist Manifesto (1977) – has brought about. But it would be problematic to attribute it entirely to capitalism in this way. The state also plays an important role in constructing identities and producing these desires. I will discuss these issues in relation to the construction of queer culture in the case study below.

Tongzhi and the Space of Morality

At a high school gymnasium, I met Rio, Lee San, and Xiao Feilong. They are all members of a local LGBT group called Rainbow League (*caihong lianmeng*). Rainbow League has organised various interest groups, including sports, music, dance, reading, and foreign languages. The three people I interviewed belong to the volleyball group. They rent affordable sports venues from high schools and catch up with each other to play volleyball every Sunday afternoon. People in this group know each other quite well, regularly meeting both offline and online, given that the group has an online bulletin board and a QQ group for messages.

The Hong Kong-based Chi-Heng Foundation runs many interest groups and clubs for LGBT people, and for people who live with HIV/AIDS, in Shanghai. It plays an important role in such events as gay theatre premiere and in Shanghai LGBT Pride. It also runs a local pink magazine *Shi* (*Yes*), which tries to compete against the Beijing-based *Dian* (*Gayspot*) but without much success.[15] It also operates several hotlines offering free counseling services targeting LGBT people. In the same office building at 500 Xinjiang Road, one can find Leyi, an NGO for male and transgender sex workers and Beautiful Life, an NGO for people who live with HIV/AIDS. They have a group of volunteers, mostly university students, who help distribute condoms and HIV/AIDS prevention-related booklets in the local gay and sex worker communities. People in this group prefer using the term 'comrade' (*tongzhi*) instead of the English term 'gay' or the often pathologised term *tongxinglian* (*homosexual*).

Tony, a volunteer who works for a local LGBT NGO, told me that he hates the term *tongxinglian* because it is a stigmatised name for gay people. He does not like the English term 'gay' either because it is foreign. 'Gay', for him, often conjures up the image of promiscuous Western gay guys who are sexually aggressive and emotionally unstable. Whereas, for him, *tongzhi* attaches more importance to *qing* (emotional attachment) instead of *xing* (sex). *Tongzhi* are also socially responsible citizens. They work hard, study hard, and make significant contributions to society. For this respondent, the only difference between *tongzhi* and straight people is their sexual orientation. *Tongzhi* are good citizens and thus should not be discriminated against. Those who volunteer in LGBT NGOs or participate in such community events as weekend sports are, moreover, good *tongzhi*. He did not mention who is not *tongzhi* and where the borders between *tongzhi* and non-*tongzhi* might lie. But for him *tongzhi* is different from the both Western 'gays' or

the Chinese gay men who hang out in *Eddy's Bar*. This is an argument that has also been proposed by the Hong Kong scholar and activist Chou Wah-Shan (2000). The rhetoric of *suzhi* ('quality') seems to dominate in the construction of *tongzhi* identity: *tongzhi* are characterised by *gao suzhi* ('high quality').

Suzhi (usually translated as 'quality') is a popular rhetoric in post-Mao China. It effectively distinguishes people by location, class, and education. This is a rhetoric that has been widely and effectively utilised by the Chinese government to legitimise social inequalities and to consolidate its governance. People with high *suzhi* enjoy more rights and privileges than people who have low *suzhi*. This naturalises class and gender differences as well as an urban/ rural divide. Furthermore, the state often launches different campaigns to 'improve' people's *suzhi*, to craft legitimate citizens, and to facilitate its governance. Andrew Kipnis (2006) even considers *suzhi* as a 'keyword' for understanding contemporary China's governmentality. The state-initiated discourse of *suzhi*, which later gained enormous popularity in people's everyday life, serves as an effective means to consolidate and reinforce social hierarchies (Donald et al. 2009; Jacobs 2009; Sigley 2009; Tomba 2009; Woronov 2009).

Tongzhi, therefore, is a sexual subject that fits into the agenda of the nation state. On the Rainbow League website, the conduct guidelines for being a good *tongzhi* are clearly spelt out:

> Rainbow League advocates healthy lifestyles. Posting illegal, reactionary, and politically-sensitive information is strictly forbidden. Posters that do not comply with the policy will be deleted with their authors' membership deprived.

But if *tongzhi* is a legitimate political subject abiding by the rules of society and being good citizens for the state, a problem still remains between the Rainbow League's representation of the citizen and *tongzhi*, evidenced by the need for specific reference to the state in this warning. The citizenship of *tongzhi* is desexualised in public discourse. If *tongzhi* is indeed characterised by *qing* (deep sentiment) instead of *xing* (sex), as Chou (2000) suggests, this also means that multiplicities of sexuality have been reduced to a singularity in relation to which some forms of sexuality have been marginalised.

It is also worth noting the regional differences in queer practice unveiled by the politics of 'tongzhi'. For instance, Beijing *tongzhi* are perceived by my respondents as very politically-conscious and too serious. They always have numerous meetings to attend and a lot of social activism to attend to. That's why such influential LGBT events, including queer film festivals, queer art exhibitions and same-sex marriage petitions, are held in Beijing. Shanghai people perceive themselves, on the other hand, to be more relaxed and pragmatic; they celebrate everydayness and enjoy the fun that consumerism brings to them. When the Beijing *tongzh*i NGOs hold numerous meetings and are concerned about such grand topics as 'the future of China's LGBT movement', their Shanghai counterparts are having dinners, playing tennis, or singing Karaoke. Peter, a local LGBT NGO

leader, told me that their organisation has to break away from its headquarters in Beijing, because the Beijing side is very dominant and bureaucratic. 'It's simply not the Shanghai style', he added.

Tongxinglian and Stigmatized Queer Spaces

Located at Anguo Road within a dilapidated working-class neighbourhood, *Lailai* Dance Hall is one of the older gay places in Shanghai. But maybe neither 'gay' nor *tongzhi* are appropriate terms to describe the people who come here. People in this venue are mostly older and more local, and they are more used to referring to themselves as *tongxinglian* (same-sex love; homosexuals). *Lailai* Dance Hall is, as the name suggests, a place for ballroom dance. Ballroom dance used to be popular in the 1920s and 30s as a sign of modernity in colonial Shanghai. They revived in the 1980s with the state call for 'reform and opening-up' (*gaige kaifang*) when, with the emergence of disco bars which attracted many young people in the 1990s, ballroom dance became a social marker of generation and age and a location for once fashionable youth who had become middle-aged or elderly citizens. Young men who come to *Lailai* Dance Hall seeking an uncle, daddy, or grandpa type of partner are ironically referred to as the 'archaeologist team' (*kaogudui*) in local gay slang. The dance hall only opens three nights a week: 7-9 pm every Friday to Sunday. Most middle-aged *tongxinglian* who come here are married men who slip away from their wives and children to meet their fellow *tongxinglian* at weekends. The entrance fee is not expensive, only five RMB per person. Snacks and drinks are served at supermarket prices in the dance hall. Evidently this is a place catering to people of lower social classes and with limited incomes.

The dance hall is large. People sit in groups drinking and chatting on the old sofas or plastic chairs lined up against the wall. They eat sunflower seeds quickly while drinking local-brand beer, throwing their nut skins carelessly on the floor. In the centre of the dance hall, many people dance in pairs. Most music is a slow-pace waltz adapted from popular songs from the 1980s and 90s. In the front of the dance hall, there is a stage on which performers, including many cross-dressers, are singing and dancing. The whole place has a relaxing atmosphere. At nine o'clock, the music stops and people stand up and leave the dance hall. Within five minutes, the once packed dance hall abruptly empties out, with only the waiters left to do some cleaning-up jobs. Everybody seems to know where to go: the *Xiahaimiao* Public Garden.

Xiahaimiao is a road-side public park located within five minutes walk from the *Lailai* Dance Hall. Crossing the dirty neighbourhood and passing by some restaurants, hairdressers, massage parlours, and sex shops, many of which are same-sex services, the crowd arrive at a small park on the roadside. A procession of flamboyantly-dressed men cross the narrow streets, talking loudly and flirting with

each other, as they head to their destination. People in the neighbourhood seem used to the spectacle and no one bothers to make a fuss about it.

The public garden is dark, with only a couple of roadside lamps and the lights from the shop windows on the other side of road. People sit in groups on the park benches continuing their conversation and flirtation. Many enjoy examining the passersby, assessing them for their sexual appeal. And some clearly walk up and down trying to catch others' attention. Some braver individuals directly walk up to strangers trying to make conservation, a few even beginning their greetings by touching other people's bodies. Public bodily contact seems quite common here and accepting other people's touches usually leads to more intimate touches and even to sex. A polite refusal, however, will also be understood by the other person without taking offence. In the bushes, some people have already found their sex partners and started to enjoy one-night-stand (419 in Chinese gay slang) sex. Despite the flamboyance of some, most people who come here are casually dressed. Some are also not neatly dressed at all and speak with accents from other provinces. They seem to be *waidiren* (people from other regions) who are often looked down upon by many Shanghainese.

One Shanghainese I talked to in the public garden expressed his contempt for 'these people' who come to the garden: 'they are *waidiren*', he said. According to him, some of them are migrant workers from poor areas in China. They have lower *suzhi* than the Shanghainese. 'Only lower-class people come here,' he said, quite oblivious to the irony of his being there himself, 'most do not have a decent income. Some even come here after nine o'clock to meet the crowd without having to pay the five *yuan* entrance fee at the *Lailai* Dance Hall.' This man also warned me that some of the young and nice-looking people are MBs (money boys, or rent boys). 'These MBs are not gay and they engage in homosexual sex only to earn money', he explained, 'these people are dangerous. Some even cheat or blackmail their clients.' His suggestion to me was not to hang out with *waidiren* and MBs. I was surprised that I was somehow not considered as a *waidiren* by him although I do not come from Shanghai. While my clothes and my standard Chinese pronunciation (*putonghua*) probably helped, *waidiren* in this context does not necessarily refer to those who are born in other Chinese cities and provinces. It is rather an identity opposed to those seeming urban and well-educated, and an abject identity cast onto people from the countryside (*xiangbalao*) or those who engage in commercial sexual activities.

It is widely believed in Shanghai's gay community that people who go to *Eddy's*, or people who participate in the Rainbow League activities have better *suzhi* than those who go to the *Lailai* Dance Hall and the *Xiahaimiao* Public Garden. Such social discrimination acts like a 'structuring structure' (Bourdieu 1984) and it points to different targets in different contexts. For instance, People who go to both *Lailai* Dance Hall and *Xiahaimoiao* discriminate against people who only go to *Xiahaimiao*, simply because the latter have not paid five RMB to gain their

entitlement to using a queer public space. At the *Xiahaimiao* Public Garden, urbanites discriminate against rural people; Shanghainese discriminate against people from other provinces; masculine people discriminate against effeminate people. Everybody seems eager to mark themselves off from such abject identities as rural people, migrant workers, and sex workers. It matters then that the rhetoric of *suzhi* originally came from state policy as a biopolitical strategy to facilitate the administration of populations and to and legitimise social inequalities. It has now been accepted and internalised by people who construct their own identities in reference to other identities. Across this social field the difference between 'gay', *tongzhi* and *tongxinglian* is not simply linguistic, but social and cultural as well. It unveils a multiplicity of differences and social disparities. It also points to the impact of such factors as globalisation, nationalism, and commercialisation on people's daily lives and individual experiences.

Conclusion

I have so far discussed three types of subjects in Shanghai's gay community: the transnational and multilingual 'gay', the young and energetic *tongzhi*, as well as the older and often married *tongxinglian*. These subjectivities are not totally distinct from or exclusive of each other. They converge and overlap in different ways. A person can be gay and *tongzhi* and *tongxinglian*, depending on where he is and how he understands these terms. It is important to note that identities, and not only for gay people, are always multiple, fluid and contingent. They are never fixed or singular. We should also bear in mind that identities are as socially constructed as they are individually constructed. People do have different understandings of identities and different ways to negotiate identities. The three terms, 'gay', *tongzhi* and *tongxinglian*, are nevertheless different social identities at least because they have inherited different social, political and historical aspects of China. 'Gay' is the subject of Shanghai's transnationalism and cosmopolitanism; it celebrates the success of China's reform and opening-up to global capitalism. *Tongzhi* fosters a group of young, well-educated, rights-conscious and socially responsible urban youth. And *tongxinglian* is a term that was invented by medical and public health discourse and is the target population of HIV/AIDS prevention and police intervention. All three are positioned in a transitional era in China when gay people still have some difficulty negotiating their identities with their families, work, and the wider part of society.

These three subjects seem to have their own spaces, located in different parts of Shanghai. 'Gays' find their way to the trendy bars such as *Eddy's*, *Shanghai Studio*, *D2 Club*, and *Frangipani*, mostly located in the former French concessions and gentrified neighbourhoods (or 'gaybourhoods' in the transnational gay slang). These places are exclusive in economic and social terms. *Tongzhi* are happy with the more egalitarian and locally/community organised activities such as sports,

singing Karaoke, and having dinner together. They seem more interested in 'building a harmoniously gay community' and 'improving the *suzhi* of the gay community', as many *tongzhi* websites claim. Their sense of gay space is based on morality and social responsibility. A restaurant or a sports ground can be appropriated as gay space by them under certain circumstances. And *tongxinglian* find their spaces in the now-unfashionable dance halls, public gardens, public toilets, saunas and bathhouses, hairdressers and massage parlours which offer sex services. Most of these places are located in poor or working-class neighbourhoods. They represent the universal side of 'queer culture' – the pragmatism and necessity of 'having sex' that is independent of social, economic and moral causes. In this way, the whole city's sexual landscape is unevenly hierarchical. Same-sex practices, far from being natural or corporeal, are clearly marked by social difference.

The discourse of *suzhi* and people's everyday understanding of their local identities, demonstrate such impacts. However, the discourse of *suzhi* also encourages people to improve their lives. Local identities and regional differences can also serve as a form of cultural resistance exemplified in this case of queer culture and queer spaces. : at least it empowers Shanghai people to say no to the central government on some occasions with the statement 'This is not the way things are done in Shanghai'. Despite the state's effort in regulating queer cultural practice, the differences among various queer cultural groups are clearly demonstrated through the way queer spaces are constructed in Shanghai.

Returning to the beginning of this article then, when we say that Shanghai is a gay metropolis and that the Shanghainese embrace cosmopolitanism, we may need to ponder what type(s) of 'gay' identity we are talking about, and what is hidden beneath the gleaming dreams of Shanghai's urban cosmopolitanism that seems to bring them together.

Dr. Hongwei Bao is British Academy visiting fellow in Department of Media and Communications, Goldsmiths, University of London, UK. He has recently completed his Ph.D. thesis, titled *'Queer Comrades':Gay Identity and Politics in Postsocialist China*, in Department of Gender and Cultural Studies, the University of Sydney, Australia. He has taught media studies, cultural studies, gender studies and Asian studies at the National Academy of Chinese Theatrical Arts, China; the University of Sydney, Australia, and the University of Potsdam, Germany. His research interests include queer theory, transnational and postcolonial studies, urban geography, and alternative media. Dr. Bao will start a full-time position as lecrturer in Asian media at Nottingham Trent University, UK, in February, 2012. E-mail: renebao@gmail.com

Notes

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2 There are two courses on LGBT Studies offered by Fudan University, Shanghai: 'Homosexual Health Social Science' (*tongxinglian jiankang shehui kexue*) coordinated by Professor Gao Yanning from the School of Health Sciences since 2003 and 'Gay Studies' (*tongxinglian yanjiu*) coordinated by Associate Professor Sun Zhongxin from Department of Sociology since 2005.

3 In China, gay weddings have not been recognised by law, although there have been repeated appeals to the state legislative body to legalise same-sex marriage rights. One of the most outspoken advocates of same-sex marriage in China is Professor Li Yinhe, China's leading sexologist from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Since 2003, Li has appealed to the National people's Congress and National People's Political Consultative Conference to recognise same-sex marriage rights. Her appeals have generated heated debate in Chinese media..

4 This is an online citation. Therefore it does not have a page number. See bibliography for the web link.

5 One of the most popular questions that people ask in China when they meet for the first time is, 'where do you come from?' Where one comes from is closely associated with urban/rural divide, class and certain stereotypes about the locality. For discussions about local and translocal cultures in China, see (Goodman, 1986, 1997; Oakes & Schein, 2006)

6 All the translation from Chinese materials into English in this article has been produced by the author unless otherwise stated.

7 Apart from reasons such as termination of land leases and demolition of old neighbourhoods, Lee San explained that one reason many gay bars in Shanghai stay closed for long periods of time is the bar owners' pragmatism. 'They do not have a sense to serve the community,' he said, 'that is why as soon as the bars do not make profits, they shut them down.' Yutian, another interviewee from Shanghai, also points out the fast changes in Shanghai's gay scene: 'New bars open and close every year. A once-most-popular bar loses its popularity in a mere few months. People crowd to others bars and forget the old ones, which close very quickly.' The Shanghai 'pragmatism' and its obsession with the 'new' will be discussed later in this article.

8 Although this article primarily deals with gay identity in contemporary China, one should not assume that China's historical past is not relevant. Indeed, today's queer sexuality is still subject to the influence of the past, and traditional concepts of gender, sexuality and identity still leave traces on contemporary queer subject formation. The rupture between the 'premodern' and 'modern' episteme of sexuality is also evident. Due to the limit of space, this article has not delved into the discussion of traditional concepts of homoeroticism. For a detailed description of homoeroticism in premodern China, see Hinsch 1990; Wu 2004 and Zhang 2001.

9 For a more detailed account of a historical review of the gay spaces in Shanghai, see the Shanghai LGBT Pride week panel discussion: http://www.iboysky.com/inews/guonei/200906/26219.shtml.

10 Some international foundations that fund HIV/AIDS prevention in China include the Ford Foundation, Chi-Heng Foundation and the Clinton Foundation. The Chinese government, represented by the Centre for Disease Control under the administration of the Ministry of Public Health (*weishengbu*), has also funded a number of programs on HIV/AIDS prevention. Most of the HIV/AIDS campaigns involve mobilization of the grassroots LGBT community, which entails the funding of NGOs in different parts of China. As most of these NGOs are funded

by 'projects' (*xiangmu*), a great many disappear when the projects are over. Some interviewees have remarked that these NGOs are short-lived and their work lacks sustainable goals and presence. Also, the clashes of interest between different NGOs and foundations have caused concern. At the LGBT NGO conference on HIV/AIDS held in Beijing in December, 2008, Zhang Beichuan addressed the problems of 'lack of sustainability' (*quefa chixuxing*) and 'internal struggle' (*neihong*) specifically.

11 The full name of the conference is Working Conference on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Treatment among MSM Groups, the Ten-Year Anniversary Celebration of *Friends Exchange* Project, and Berry & Martin Prize Awarding Ceremony. The conference was organised jointly by the China Preventive Medicine Association and the Friends Exchange Project led by Zhang Beichuan from the Medical School of Qingdao University. I thank Professor Zhang for his kind invitation.

12 The earliest gay culture festival I have been able to locate in China was scheduled to be held in 788 art district in northeast Beijing in December 2005. It was called to a halt by police (Macartney 2005; Cristini 2006).

13 'We should not let anything happen that might embarrass the government,' Hannah Miller, organiser of the Shanghai LGBT Pride, said to the *New York Times* correspondent after returning from the impromptu sidewalk meeting. She explained the reason for the impromptu meeting with the Chinese police as 'that was a close call'. (Jacobs 2009) It was apparent that the event organiser negotiated with the Chinese police and both parties made some compromise. The result of the negotiation was that the Pride Week could continue but some events that might involve too many people had to be cancelled and the publicity of events had to be limited to the English-language media.

14 For a discussion of the politics of reticence in Chinese queer politics, see Liu Jen-peng and Ding Naifei 'Reticent Poetics, Queer Politics'(2005a).

15 For an explanation of the magazine title *Shi* (*Ya*), see http://www.tongyulala.org/communityview.php?id=122 (accessed Nov. 10, 2009). The blog of the Dian (Gayspot) magazine http://blog.sina.com.cn/gayspot (accessed Nov. 10, 2009); *LES+* magazine: http://blog.sina.com.cn/lesplus (accessed Nov. 10, 2009).

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The Invisible Turn to the Future: Commemorative Culture in Contemporary Shanghai

By Lü Pan

Abstract

After decades of fierce political struggles in the Mao era, the People's Republic of China has strived economically under the open-door policy since the end of the 1970s. However, the still firm national monuments that weathered the social vicissitudes are left open to the question of how they could be incorporated into the new national ideology. In comparison to Beijing, Shanghai's overwhelmingly predominant image centers on its role as the economic dragonhead of China. This article argues that Shanghai, exactly because of this ostensibly apolitical profile, provides a rarely discussed but highly meaningful approach to examining the dynamics between contemporary Chinese commemorative culture and the post-socialist urban spatial order. Unlike the East European cases, the "critical juncture" of ideology in China is invisible in the official narratives of the monuments. In some circumstances, the renovation of old memorials seem to fulfill the task of glorifying a certain past but in effect, it leaves the place a self-enclosed venue that sheds the rest of the city from the ideological burden. In other cases, some monuments of the seemingly core nationalistic narratives are marginalized. What's more, new attentions are now drawn to the memorials for the history of "others" in the name of cosmopolitanism. The invisibility of the commemorative narratives speaks directly to the perplexity of assuming national identity in contemporary China. In the light of Prasenjit Duara's idea of "bifurcated history", national memory culture in Shanghai suggests the multiple possibilities of deciphering the city's past and its future.

Keywords: Commemorative culture, modernity, war memory, cosmopolitanism, post-socialist China

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Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.

-- George Orwell *1984* (1949)

Monumental Desires: City, Nation-state and Commemorative Space

Monuments dedicated to national memories in Shanghai illustrate some intriguing issues about (post)modern commemorative spaces. Having experienced the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and the student movement in 1989, the Chinese commemorative spaces and monuments are not straightforward in producing their meanings. The national agenda of the People's Republic of China has turned from fierce political struggle to an economy-oriented open-door policy since the late 1970s and has been experiencing a full-speed boom since the early 1990s. The influences of similar social transformations can also be found in the commemorative culture in Russia or the former Eastern European communist countries. Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson, for example, researched how Soviet-era monuments were re-negotiated in post – Soviet present and have suggested three possible categories of the current treatment of monuments in Moscow: Co-opted/Glorified, Disavowed, or Contested.[1] However, the fate of the post-Soviet "disgraced monuments", which refer to the numerous destroyed memorial artifacts of the Communist era such as the statues of Lenin and Stalin, has not befallen most of the Chinese monuments.[2] Due to the unshaken political rule of the Chinese Communist party, the question Chinese national monuments are confronted with is how they could be incorporated into a revised national ideology that is still deeply entangled in the continuities and discontinuities of its political vicissitudes.

At first glance, the association between monumental significance and the city of Shanghai may easily pass by unnoticed. When the most prominent national symbols of contemporary China – for example Tiananmen Square and the Monument to the People's Heroes – are located in Beijing, Shanghai's monuments represent a relatively less solid ideological discourse. The focus on Shanghai's urban history usually goes on two seemingly opposed tracks: on the one hand, endless nostalgia for the cosmopolitan prosperity, bourgeois culture and urban modernity during its golden age in the 1930s; on the other hand, recuperating the forgotten working class narrative of the pre-revolutionary years and now (Cai 2003; Zhang 2005). The passion to understand Shanghai's civil society (if there was one) always centers on the discourse of the city's popular culture. This research suggests that Shanghai, exactly because of this ostensibly apolitical profile, provides us with an interesting perspective on understanding the post-revolutionary Chinese nation-state that is embedded in an equivocal articulation of its subjectivity. Through a study of the city's commemorative spaces and their contested discourses of producing a Chinese national identity in the public memory, I will try to show how

urban spaces might work as alternative "cue-ins" for rethinking inconsistencies in the national historiography that might otherwise have been seamlessly integrated.

Monuments, as public spatial representations, are in this sense connected with the (re)interpretation and memory of a diverse public. As a crystallization and spatialization of the essence of the national myth, monuments and memorials are primarily erected by the nation-state's main political powers to assert a national identity. As Eric Hobsbawm (1992) and Benedict Anderson (1991) influentially contend, the nation-state is a relatively recent invention in human history and is deeply connected with the discourse of modernity. In other words, nations are made up in part by the common imagination of the collective and the continuous existence of a modern territory. Architectural objects become concrete vehicles through which such collective imagination is materialized. "Certain artifacts and events – such as dead bodies, gravesites, and burial ceremonies – have unique symbolic power because they invoke a sense of timelessness, awe, fear, and uncertainty (Verdery 1999: 23-53). The power to transcend time, to bring historical events and personalities into the present, makes such objects especially effective in mobilizing national movements" (Forest & Johnson 2002: 526). In addition, as spatial representations in memory of a historical happening, monuments invoke the core contradiction between modernity and its temporality. According to Alois Riegl's categorization, the modern monuments I refer to here belong to an "intentional commemorative value" (Riegl 1982: 38). While the other two, age-value and historical value let time work on spatial meaning, "(i)ntentional commemorative value aims to preserve a moment in the consciousness of later generations, and therefore to remain alive and present in perpetuity. This third class of commemorative values forms the obvious transition to present-day values" (Ibid. 38). However, when most monuments endeavor to consolidate certain beliefs of the present by overtly commemorating a finished past, which is meant to be of timeless and sublime value, history and memory constantly challenge or negate such a desired stability. If monuments try to speak to the public with their symbolic power that suggests the immortality of a certain value, the question remains to what extent this value remains valid vis-à-vis the mortality of the nation-state, its culture and its related historical narrative. Meanwhile, monuments are always part of the discourse of public art and thus involve discussions on its aesthetic value and style, another realm of contestation concerning periodic perceptions.

However, discourses of different kinds of memory, as Marita Sturken indicates in her book on American cultural memory, "reveal the demand for a less monolithic, more inclusive image" of a nation-state (Sturken 1997: 13). Although political elites have power over the erection of monuments, a study on the making of monuments is impossible if we only account for this influence and not consider the "hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people" (Hobsbawm 1992: 10). In this regard, the study of commemorative spaces in the urban environment crystallizes the dynamics of various subjects of history and memory. Space is not

an empty, homogenous container of events but produces and reproduces meaning along with historical, mnemonic, political and ideological transformations. Thus, the process in which monuments are constructed, reconstructed, restored or removed embodies a constant questioning of how the discourse of modern nation-state is imagined or designed by both society and state.

In this vein, the study of Chinese national monuments can also be conducted by observing the dynamics among various agents of history/memory writing. In *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (1995), Indian-American historian Prasenjit Duara asserts the "bifurcated history" paradigm in his studies of Chinese nationalism. He argues that a linear presentation of history from a singular perspective of the nation-state tends to exclude, forget and repress other narratives, which are simultaneously existent.[3] Inspired by Duara's idea of bifurcated history, I contend, therefore, that space rather than time and a temporal subject of history can become a lens to understand the nation-state, different forms of identities and the power relations they present. I argue that the city can provide an arena of the nation-state rather than the other way around. In the case of China, for a long period of time after 1949, urban history was largely seen as a marginal area of Chinese studies. The central topics of Chinese modern history, such as the countryside and revolution, both fit into the global imagination largely acquired through the atmosphere of the Cold War and were well utilized for domestic ideological control (Bergère 1997: 309-328). The marginalization of Shanghai in the Chinese national historical narrative has revealed the inadequacy of a temporally singular Subject of History, which is unified under a nation and excludes other histories in local – in this case Shanghai – spaces. As a result, the difficulty of placing Shanghai within a consistent narrative of Chinese national history has made Shanghai appear to be less significant in understanding Chinese identity. The recent revival of studying depoliticized Shanghai cultural behavior, in particular in the Republican Era, puts Chinese urban studies under the category of civil society, which appears to be antagonistic to the state in the Habermasian idea of "public sphere". However, this idealized western dichotomy between civil society and state remains problematic not only because the experience of mass mobilization in Chinese society differs from that of the West but also because validity of this dichotomy is consequently questionable (Bergère 1997).

Moreover, with regard to actual urban space, as a space where the contested subjects encountered one another, the city provides a way of re-examining history vis-à-vis the nation-state, local variations and cosmopolitan desires. In the following elaboration on the discursive analysis of several important national monuments in today's Shanghai, I will illustrate the historical experience and historical memories that are not just frozen in monumental representations with a conclusive spatial meaning. They also emerge as fluid marks in media, literature, academic research and living individual memories. The purpose of this research lies in understanding the historicized now-time of space and how meaning is constructed

by histories and memories. The spatial study on Shanghai focuses on the present though it doesn't try to de-historicize space merely by its face value. The spatial narratives in this article also reveal constant tension, appropriation, rewriting or repression. The relation between the signifier and the signified is not only lacking transparency but also constantly taken up with the alternation of ideological needs. The invisibility of the commemorative narrative speaks directly to the complexity of assuming national identity in the post-revolutionary China. National memory culture in Shanghai suggests the multiple possibilities of deciphering the past and future of the city and the nation.

As was previously mentioned, the ideological turn Shanghai experienced has left its commemorative culture contested visibly and invisibly. In the first decade after the Cultural Revolution, the major state-funded monuments in Shanghai, like in the other cities in China, were all constructed in the early to mid-1980s as a response to the healing period of national trauma. Since Deng's speech in his Southern Tour in Shanghai in 1992, the city and its adjacent Yangtze River Delta has become the "dragonhead" of the country's economic development. This situation makes the rupture between the collective memory of a highly politicized past and a predominantly market-oriented status quo particularly perceptible. Yet, national monuments and commemorative sites in Shanghai try to integrate themselves into a newly invented narrative of today, with a shift that tries not to contradict those of the past. In the following, I will firstly show how the Memorial House of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) was appropriated into this contemporary narrative as a tourist spot, merged with the nearby Xintiandi Bar Quarter. Western scholars such as Kirk A. Denton and Elisabeth Perry have also mentioned the Shanghai Municipal History Museum as an example of a site that has put more emphasis on local history and Republican civil life as the main line of historical narration, demonstrating a radical departure from the approach of most history museums in the PRC (Denton 2005; Perry 2004). The balance is subtly kept between the still orthodox continuity with a past narrative and the silent adaptation to a new, self-contradictory and parallel one. As a result, this type of narrative conceals much of the contested collective memory present and latently foments a radical or cynical attitude of the public towards a not yet fully discussed past.

Secondly, discourses on nationalism as represented in the commemorative spaces in Shanghai also illustrate a deep dilemma between proclaiming a national subject and the restraints on so doing. The narrative that circulates around memorials in Shanghai has to remain consistent even though the ideological motif has reversed its intended meaning or has even subverted a previous ideological stand. One interesting phenomenon is that the discourse of nationalism with regard to significant sites of memory in Shanghai is understood in terms of patriotism and are called the "patriotic education bases" (*aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu jidi*). The replacement of nationalism by patriotism not only weakens any xenophobic overtone but

also constitutes a relatively less well-defined national subject in an inconsistent nationalist narrative, above all in a WWII discourse. It is more or less an institutional tool of domestic propaganda to divert the attention of the public from the national subject to the state/party subject. The marginalization of the WWII war memory of the Sihang Warehouse, for example, shows the embarrassment of the PRC in commemorating a highly symbolic nationalist space when visibility of Republican China and the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) as national subject is unavoidable.

Finally, re-articulating the city's Jewish memory and the enormous investment in restoring the relics of the Korean Exile Government shows how the discourse of national modernity is understood in terms of mobilizing Shanghai's past cosmopolitanism. Boosting the city's cosmopolitan image becomes a means of garnering more global attention and resources for Shanghai's production of space with more symbolic and actual capital. It ironically sets off the abovementioned disregard of Shanghai's own war memory spaces, whose mainstream narratives orientate themselves towards the changing circumstances of China's official political and economic agenda.

The relations between the national discourse and Shanghai urbanity demonstrate a degree of complexity largely because both the forgetting and the affirmation of certain kinds of knowledge have been underscored in order to abandon the co-evalness of different histories. Monuments and memorials provide us with more concrete representations of this complexity. By examining the best preserved and restored national commemorative places, the forgotten sites of national memory and newly "re-invoked" memory of others' historic relics in Shanghai, the tensions between these categories will emerge.

Shanghai and Chinese National Discourse

Before I scrutinize the narratives to which the monuments in today's Shanghai give rise, I will situate the historical position of urban Shanghai within the discourse of modern China to demystify the popular view that Shanghai is less significant in understanding Chinese national culture than its civic culture. Firstly, in a more general sense, there exists an undeniable link between the rise of Chinese urban society and the appeal for a modern Chinese republican regime. The importance of Shanghai in the 1911 Xinhai Revolution was clear enough to help us understand why it has been conceived as a "bourgeois revolution" by the Chinese circle of post-1949 history studies, in order to differentiate it from the later "proletarian revolution"[4]. Not only was Shanghai a vital meeting point for different political forces but it also provided a huge amount of financial capital for the Revolution. Shanghai's capacity to mobilize the masses deeply influenced the city itself as well as the Yangtze River Delta. French scholar Marie-Claire Bergère argues in her *Shanghai: China's Gateway to Modernity* that the deep structural change of

Chinese urban society (above all treaty port cities) was among one of the key reasons why the Qing Government failed to mobilize the urban elite class and the consequence of this failure can at least partly account for the demise of Qing Dynasty (Bergère 2005). Chinese urban elites living in the treaty ports were the first ones whose nationalistic consciousness was aroused by coming into contact with the West. This nationalistic emotion of urban society, however, was a complicated one. The idea of modernity and the nationalism of Chinese treaty ports, which differed radically from the xenophobia present in the vast interior area, was adaptive but still strongly resistant. The West was considered as a mode of development and a threatening power. Understandably, this realistic attitude was based on compromise and resistance and was first and foremost reflected in the world of commerce. [5] This flexibility allowed Shanghai to possess multiple narratives and social class identities. Neither its "impurity" in nationalistic discourse nor its progressiveness in revolutionary discourse can be taken for granted as one single image of the sophisticated city.

Secondly, Shanghai, though depreciated in the post-1949 national ideology as non-progressive because of its colonial and capitalistic characteristics, was the place where a series of influential left-wing political movements took place. The now official historical narrative of Shanghai's "glorious revolutionary tradition" is consistently related to its numerous and influential labor movements, student protests and above all, the first congress meeting of the Communist Party of China. This tradition, however, also relates to its colonial status and capitalistic development. The most active early communist groups in China were in Shanghai largely because the foreign concessions provided a relatively safe place for secret gatherings and an interim site for freedom of speech (Bergère 2005: 156). In addition, as China's biggest commercial and industrial base, Shanghai became the center of the labor movement, one of the core projects of Chinese Communism. Labor movements are inconceivable without a relatively developed industrial system, in which urban class struggles become a major social problem under capitalist conditions.[6] In this sense, Shanghai's urban condition largely determined its subtly crucial role in determining national political circumstances.

Moreover, the position of Shanghai as the center of mass media and film culture helped to spread strong nationalistic emotions and imagination. *Shun Pao* (literally Shanghai Newspaper), for example, was the most influential newspaper in modern China. Established in 1872 and closed down in 1949, the first Chinese language newspaper in Shanghai traversed the most turbulent years of the formation of the modern Chinese nation-state. More influentially, *Shun Pao* played an important role in forming public opinion by covering debates about public issues. During the May Fourth Movement, for example, *Shun Pao* refused to publish advertisements for Japanese products. Under the management of Shi Liangcai, *Shun Pao* provided a space for relatively free opinion and diverse information, which won the favor of a large audience. At the same time, the rapid de-

velopment of the film industry in Shanghai gave rise to a nationalism buoyed by cinematic experience. It is therefore not surprising to realize that even the national anthem of the PRC, "The March of the Volunteers", was the theme song of a 1935 Shanghai film, *Children of Troubled Times*, which depicts the deep national crisis of China under Japanese occupation. As the only place temporarily out of the reach of the occupation, cinema in the Shanghai era of a "solitary island" (that is, 1937-1941, when the still autonomous foreign concessions in Shanghai were besieged by Japanese control), was the only place where the production of films with subtle nationalistic motifs was possible. Carefully dealing with the Japanese pressure at the door, films such as *Mulan Joins the Army* (1939) and *Confuses* (1940) sent strong symbolic messages calling for national resistance that featured less provocative yet well-known figures in Chinese traditional culture. In a word, Shanghai's highly mature mass media culture brought the city to the forefront of national discourse in the 1930s.

Fourthly, in the post-1949 years Shanghai experienced an understandable sea change in its urbanity – a new national narrative emerged, eager to rewrite its past. In his *Shanghai Image: Critical Iconography, Minor Literature, and the Unmaking of a Modern Chinese Mythology,* Zhang Xudong examines the self-imaging of Shanghai during the 10th anniversary of the National Day of the PRC by Zhang Chunqiao, a notorious member of the "Gang of Four".[7] In his narrative of Shanghai, the establishment of the new nation-state had transformed the city into a monument to a drastic break with the historical past (Zhang 2002, 149). In Zhang Chunqiao's narrative, Shanghai had been converted from a hell for the working class which was ruthlessly exploited by capitalists and imperialists, to a center of industry and culture in the new nation of the people. Shanghai was seen as depraved; therefore it was satisfying to see the narrative shift and the city to overcome its past. Noticeably, Shanghai later became the "city of the highest virtue" in the Cultural Revolution and the center for action of this extreme leftist political turbulence with an enduring influence on contemporary China.

In this vein, Shanghai formed a site for a peculiar and dramatic juxtaposition between orthodox national ideology and a residual civil vibrancy. In his account of Chinese civil awareness, Shanghai scholar Zhu Xueqin mentioned what he calls the "sandwich" feature of

Shanghai. The Bund, Shanghai's famous riverside promenade with its large number of architectural legacies from the city's semi-colonial past, is explored by Zhu as an example to illustrate this feature. Until the 1990s, architecture on the Bund – the hotels, clubs, bank buildings and other spatial embodiments of colonial modernity – were functionally reformed for other uses. The Shanghai Municipal Government, or the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, for example, was located in the former HSBC building, the most magnificent architectural feature on the promenade. The Bund, however, remains a public space for Shanghai's everyday bourgeois life. At a time when public space for erotic encounters such as cafés, cinema, discos or pubs were not widely available in the socialist Shanghai, the famous "lovers' wall" on the Bund, a nickname given to the anti-flood wall by the Huangpu River, was where numerous young lovers and couples had their most romantic dates. By depicting the contrast between the stiff bodies of the guards in front of the government building and the kissing lovers along the wall of the river dyke, Zhu tries to draw our attention to "a very interesting feature" that Shanghai after 1949 manifested:

> the 'left-leaning' style of the upper political dictatorship of the proletariat was so overwhelming that the most of the Chinese political movements after 1949 originated from the city. At the same time, the grassroots of the city was permeated with an equally strong 'right-leaning' atmosphere that was tenacious and visible in civic life. … Solider and lover, the two oppositional colors could squeeze together, floating atop the life of the Chinese interior area like a giant urban sandwich… it's important to remember the 'sandwich' characteristic of the city, which may be still valid even till today.[8]

Today's predominant image of Shanghai as the economic dragonhead of China is not sufficient to understand the city itself or the city vis-à-vis the nation. The following analysis on commemorative culture in Shanghai tries to open up a new space in this regard.

Invisible Ideological turn: The Memorial House of the First National Congress of the CPC and the Memorial to the May Thirtieth Movement

In post-revolutionary China, the essential question for the historiography of the national myth is, as Kirk A. Denton poses, "how can revolutionary history, grounded in martyrdom and self-sacrifice, be made to relate to a globalizing market economy that has self-interest as its primary motivating force" (Denton 2005: 581). The memorial house renovation, where the first national congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) was held in June 1921, provides a possible answer. Probably no other official memorial place in Shanghai is as important as this venue. Among the first list of Preserved Cultural Relics of the People's Republic of China, which includes the national historical sites and cultural entities of the highest level, the previously ordinary residential house (of the typical Shanghai

Shikumen style, a form of local architecture) on Wantze Road (now Xingye Road) in the French Concession, became the sacred place of the city and the nation. It was not a coincidence that the secret gathering of the avant-garde and progressive political activists at that time could be held in the decadent but cosmopolitan Shanghai where a multiplicity of political thoughts thrived under the state during semi-colonization. Thirteen party delegates from all over China, including Mao Zedong and Chen Duxiu, attended the meeting in which the CPC was officially founded. It was not until 28 years later, when the PRC was established, that Chen Yi, the first mayor of post-1949 Shanghai proposed that this place should be restored into a monument for the new nation in a new regime. In 1952, the memorial house was open to the public.

In 1996, Shanghai Municipal Government decided to expand and renovate the Memorial House. Though part of the larger urban renewal project of Taipingqiao Area, the important national historical relics and basic structure of its adjacent area of Shikumen houses were under state protection. The Taipingqiao renewal project, however, was essentially a real-estate development project largely supported by the investment of foreign capital. This made the whole project a mixture of political and economic significance. In China, urban renewal projects such as this one were motivated not just by the need of urban regeneration per se but also by opportunities of the nation's (re-)claiming of self-identity in the global arena through international events: the APEC Conference in 2001 in Shanghai was such a motivation. The first large-scale downtown renovation project, which included

the site of the Memorial house, the well-known leisure quarter "Xintiandi" and other commercial housing projects, constitutes a showcase of Shanghai's image ten years after Shanghai was "allowed" to retrieve its leading position in the national economy (thanks to Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour). The joint plan involving global capital and local governmental support changed the symbolic meaning of this site steeped in the memory of revolution. Reemerging as part of a chic bar quarter in central Shanghai, the Memorial House was transformed into one of the most popular tourist attractions associated with the city's modern history. Like other sites of China's so-called "red tourism", this memorial in Shanghai well exemplifies how ideological pedagogy and leisure consumption can be fused into one project. Red tourism, which refers to trips (usually guided on group basis) to historical locations that are of significance in the history of the CPC, speaks to the nation's consciousness of rescuing and re-inventing its withering Communist myths. Inevitably, the sacredness of the Memorial House is re-enhanced at the cost of going against its original ideal. The memorial now becomes a proof of the legitimacy of CPC's continuation in power. The new narrative of Shanghai under the leadership of the CPC can be seen in the Party's capacity to modernize the country and the city through the mass media:

> Shanghai was the birthplace of the Communist Party of China. The indomitable revolutionary spirit of the CPC inherited by the Shanghai people is being carried forward. A series of early reforms initiated the great development of Shanghai… Since more than ten years, the development of Pudong has been driving that of Shanghai, which moved its position from "the rear" to "the forward" in the national opening-up…Shanghai, previously a remote sea village living on fishing industry, is striding forward to a prosperous international metropolis. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, Shanghai is becoming the focus of the world. (Liu 2004: 6)

Here one notices what Zhu Xueqin calls the city's "sandwich" feature, the interplay between an orthodox ideological representation and the actual practice of a "designed" ideology with new (Chinese) characters (Zhu 2006: 336). The communist ideal that focuses on class struggle and collectivization of property is weakened, and the more abstract spirit of the revolutionary avant-garde is stressed. This spirit is not a total break with the past but more of a moderate "design" (Latour 2008). The communist project hasn't been diminished by its cooperation with capitalism but is further strengthened. At the same time, the narrative of Shanghai vis-à-vis the national development glides over key historical ruptures. The metaphor of "from the rear to the forward" addresses Shanghai's position in national developmental by obscuring a more complicated political history. This change is naturalized simply as a strategic shift in the progression of time. By skipping over more controversial historical narratives around the semi-colonial era and the post-1949 Shanghai, the myth of a sea village turning into metropolis celebrates modernity in its most conservative sense of "progress". The Party has grown out of its past uncertainty, naivety and mistakes, which are not explicitly expressed here. In the new spatial order, therefore, the memorial site naturally

converted itself into a tourist attraction that blends into the surrounding area as a distraction that blurs its original significance. In this sense, the glamorous commercial zone and the memorial site take advantage of each other, making both the break and the continuation of the historical subject possible.

With the growing ambiguity of the ideological focus of Chinese modernity after 1949, the Memorial House and the historical memory it embodies not only fail to represent the abundant layers of the space and their connection to the past and present situation of the city. The discourse of this revised anamnesis that tries to unify the historical narratives of Shanghai also conceals the parallel destiny of some less prominent monuments from the same revolutionary period. Ruptures of public memory towards monuments and the values they incarnate proliferate as the city undergoes a drastic change in appearance and self-identity. In 2006, a program on China Central Television aroused controversy about the demolition of the monument to Gu Zhenghong, a martyr of the May Thirtieth Movement (1925), which is considered as a symbolic event in the history of the Chinese labor movement and anti-imperialist resistance. While the memorial to the Movement is located in Shanghai's busiest commercial center, Nanjing Road, the statue of Gu, which was erected on the original site of the factory he worked, was demolished for a real estate project. While public opinion unanimously criticized the act of pursuing economic interest at the cost of forgetting the nation's history, the developer explained that the local cultural bureau gave their permission to demolish the monument since it was not protected as a cultural relic (Zhou 2006). The comment of an internet user (or "netizen") on the issue even associates the demolition with the reform of Shanghai's school history textbooks, in which early interpretations of leftist historical happenings were largely weakened. Criticism aimed at Shanghai city was also intense, focusing on the city's long-term image of being snobbish to non-Shanghai Chinese culture, a money-oriented mentality and lack of nationalist sentiment.[9]

The polemics present in this example reflect the embarrassment of Chinese commemorative culture in which monuments have more or less lost the validity of permanence but their face value still resists such an erosion of their symbolism. They reveal the ironical situation of China's post-revolutionary memory crisis: when capitalist urbanity is blamed for the betrayal of past beliefs, which constitute a socialist memory, the public refuses to admit the fact that it is the nation's current ideology that underpins this betrayal. In this sense, resistance to the those things which seem to undermine common national values also stems from the instability of those values themselves, especially as national history had previously been understood in one single version, becomes more complex. Thus whilst Shanghai's urbanity, in the above example, again became the target of condemnation for being oblivious to the nation's past sufferings (as after 1949) other texts and stories – though with more limited channels to the public – do circulate. Multiple narratives on the May Thirtieth Movement, for example, are seen in academ-

ic readings such as Elisabeth Perry's *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labor* (1993), which was translated into Chinese in 2001. Perry contends that the success of the labor movement was based on a series of other equally, if not more, significant reasons than the leadership of the CPC, as in the narrative of PRC historiography. Among these reasons are the opposition aroused by the prevailing racism in the foreign factories, the support of the CPC by the secret societies, and solidarity guaranteed not by ideology but by geopolitical relations and other pragmatisms.

City without War? – Shanghai War Memorials and the Sihang Warehouse

War memory sites, as another sub-category of modern national commemoration, follows a narrative that massive violence and conflict between human beings are to be regarded as part of the founding myth of a nation-state. Nuala Johnson points out that "(w)ar memorials are of special significance because they offer insights into the ways in which national cultures conceive of their pasts and mourn the large-scale destruction of life" (Johnson 1995: 51 – 65). In Shanghai, war memory and its spatial representation are almost invisible. It is astonishing to realize this fact when we think of how drastically the battles of WWII in Asia changed the city's form, still apparent today. Secondly, for people who would consider patriotism as the core ideological project of the People's Republic of China, the neglect of that war commemoration so evocative for high nationalistic sentiment may also be difficult to understand. In fact, Shanghai has no historic relics related to any war experience that are listed under the Conservation Unit of Cultural Relics, the highest level in China's preservation system for protecting the nation's important cultural legacies.

The marginalization of the WWII Sihang Warehouse, shows the PRC's embarrassment in commemorating a highly symbolic nationalist space from a moment when the legitimate Chinese national subject has to be Republican China and the KMT. Its condition reveals some core contradictions and dilemmas in modern Chinese national myth making. Sitting on the northern bank of Suzhou Creek, the site is a huge six-

storey reinforced concrete building of 20 thousand square meters. It was designed by the Hungarian architect Ladislans Edward Hudec (1893-1958), whose other works, such as the Art-Deco Park Hotel and The Grand Theatre, fundamentally transformed modern architecture in Shanghai.[10] Being the only European style warehouse in Shanghai, it was built in 1931 and served as the warehouse for five Chinese-owned private banks. It value however is not just architectural but because it was an important fortress during one of the most famous battles in the Sino-Japanese War. The Anti-Japanese War broke out in Shanghai in 1937 after total war between Japan and China had begun just one month earlier in the north. The disparity between the two military strengths was notable, with highly modernized armament and a larger number of soldiers on the Japanese side and weaker equipment on the Chinese side. When Shanghai was finally on the verge of being occupied by the Japanese, for four days and nights, the famous patriotic general Xie Jinyuan led around 480 Chinese Republican soldiers (claiming to be eight hundred to deceive the enemy) in numerous counter-attacks against the Japanese. They successfully secured the area, causing the principal Japanese force to withdraw westwards. The Sihang Warehouse was a key site of the battle due to its solid structure and its strategic location between the southern bank of Suzhou Creek and the International Settlement, which remained under the protection of Western powers and temporarily free from Japanese sway. The location of the Warehouse brought the battle to the world's attention and largely changed China's international image into war victem. More importantly, the strong resistance destroyed Japan's claim to be able to conquer China in a three month *blitzkrieg*. The young girl scout Yang Huimin also became famous, risking her life to transport a national flag to the warehouse to boost the morale of the troops and city. Under successive pressure from Japan, the International Settlement finally forced the resistant division to disarm. The soldiers were detained for four years in an isolated labor camp controlled by the Japanese. In 1941, four traitorous soldiers assassinated General Xia in the camp. The rest of the surviving soldiers were sent to labor camps in China and later to Papua New Guinea as coolies. Although the Chinese eventually lost the battle, the warehouse became the symbol of the tenacious spirit of national resistance in the enemy-occupied Shanghai. Later, it emerged as a highly mythologized narrative in the whole Sino-Japanese War propaganda effort. As early as 1938, a silent movie "Eight Hundred Heroes" won huge acclaim within the KMT area in China, Hong Kong and the Chinese diaspora in South East Asia. In KMT-ruled Taiwan, where General Chiang Kai-shek and his followers fled after the defeat by the Communists during the Chinese Civil War, the memory of the battle was kept alive in popular media as part of the patriotic constitution of a Chinese identity.[11] In 1977, Taiwanese director Ding Shanxi made his own version of *Eight Hundred Heroes*, to high acclaim amongst the Chinese nationalist film critics and audiences in the ROC.

Taking into consideration the key role of the battle and its influence on the discourse of Chinese nationalism, one might be shocked by the current condition of Sihang Warehouse. Despite the fact that this historic relic was listed as a memorial site of the Anti-Japanese War by the Shanghai Cultural Relics Preservation Committee in 1985, different work units have used parts of the bulky building as offices. Now the Sihang Warehouse is run a namesake logistics enterprise and a large part of the surrounding area makes up Shanghai's biggest stationery wholesale market. Flows of various commercial activities have pushed the site of memory into visual and mental oblivion. The only space that can remind visitors of its war history is an exhibition room no larger than 100 square meters. It was set up by the Sihang Warehouse Company for the public and is located on the seventh floor in a temporary structure. The room contains a small number of exhibits: a statue of the General Xie Jinyuan, a limited amount of visual materials and an inaccurate model of the Warehouse. Unlike museums that feature the historical significance of the CPC's contribution to the nation and the war, this semi-official commemorative space is only open to the public for a few hours on Friday afternoons. As a result, many Chinese do not recognize or are not aware of its historical significance. Visitors are also of small number. Most of the people who know and visit to the Warehouse are Taiwanese tourists and KMT veterans from Taiwan and overseas. A small number of local students who are researching "educational bases for patriotism" are also occasional visitors.

Media coverage of the battle at Sihang Warehouse and the life of the veterans who fought there have been rare and only began to emerge in 2005 on the 60th anniversary of China's victory over Japan in WWII. Chinese media outlets such as the Beijing TV Station, Shanghai Xin Min Evening News made reports and a feature documentary about the few soldiers of the 800 heroes who were still alive (Zhao et al. 2007).[12] Members of the local committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) also strongly called for the establishment of a historical museum in Sihang Warehouse in memory of the war (Jiang 2005: 3). In the same year, Li Jingfen, the then president of the Alliance for Preserving the Truth of Sino-Japanese War submitted an open letter to Shanghai mayor Han Zheng during his visit to San Francisco. She appealed for the conser-

vation of the Sihang Warehouse relics and for the construction of a large-scale memorial hall. The letter earnestly requested the Shanghai government to take up the mission and duty of safeguarding the authenticity of its war history despite political conflicts. The other significance of restoring the memorial, according to Li, included the strengthening national cohesion by promoting cross-strait relations, educational meaning to future generations and the benefit for the economic development of Shanghai as an investment to the "spiritual returns" of the city (Xin Hua Net 2005). No further official responses to the proposals have yet been heard. The Sihang Warehouse now boasts a new fashionable label as one of the numerous "creative industry bases" in Shanghai.

The current status of Sihang Warehouse is representative of many other anti-Japanese war relics in Shanghai and other Chinese cities. Sites of wartime memory in Shanghai are hardly known to the public largely due to the lack of memorial space and objects. Among these are Tiantongan Road, originally the site of Tiantongan Station and the place where the first Battle of Shanghai in 1932 broke out; nine original Assembly Centers sites, Asia's "concentration camps" where westerners in Shanghai were detained during Japanese occupation; more than 140 "comfort stations" (military brothels) all over Shanghai; the original venue of the Oriental Library affiliated with the Commercial Press, where a large number of precious Chinese book collections were destroyed during the Japanese air raid of 1932 (where a modern vocational school now sits). None of these sites of war trauma are properly commemorated. The only large-scale commemorative venue of the Sino-Japanese War in Shanghai is Songhu Anti-Japanese War Museum, which was not completed until 2000 in a remote Linjiang Park in Baoshan District.

In comparison to the monuments in the city center previously mentioned, the memory of Sino-Japanese War is far less than conspicuous in spatial representation. The Chinese historian Su Zhiliang expresses his worries over the serious deficiency in Sino-Japanese war research and commemoration in China. In an article "Tomorrow, What's still Left for us to Remember the War?" he outlines four main problems in present-day war memory preservation. Firstly, there is a very limited number of WWII memorials around China. Most resources for the war monuments go to either the "Liberation War" (that is, the Civil War) for the commemoration of the Red Army's victories. Secondly, in comparison with the memorial for the Holocaust or even the bombing of Hiroshima, China still doesn't have any memorial of warning (*Mahnmal*) to remind the future generation of historical lessons. War memory in China is only a paean to the victory of a "just war" against foreign violation or evil internal powers. Reflection on the disasters and trauma all wars leave on the individual human psyche is noticeable by its absence. Thirdly, rapid urban renewal in China has also destroyed a considerable number of relics in everyday urban spaces. Fourthly, China, though having had the largest number of victims taken as "comfort women", is yet still reluctant to conserve any

previous site of a comfort station, let alone as any formal kind of commemorative venue (Su 2006: 88).

Cosmopolitan Memory: World history in Shanghai Commemorative Culture

In an ironical contrast with the amnesia around the war experience in Shanghai, war memories from other national histories have been well preserved and memorialized as part of the cosmopolitan image of Shanghai. Two cases illustrate the situation. Most widely known is the protection of the relics of the exiled Jewish refugees who fled to Shanghai from Nazi Germany in the 1930s. The establishment of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, the erection of a monument and the renovation of the two synagogues in Shanghai have had more media exposure and social recognition than any of the abovementioned Sino-Japanese War memorials. Another interesting case is the Museum of the Former Korean Provisional Government, which was constructed on the original site of the exiled government of the 1920s and 1930s in an otherwise unnoticeable Shanghai Shikumen housing site. Adjacent to Xintiandi and the site of the first National Congress of the CPC, this museum has not only received a large number of key political figures from South Korea, but also became a popular tourist attraction for Korean visitors in Shanghai. The reverse passion for the preservation of non-Chinese national sites of historical memory prompts reflection on how the spaces of Shanghai modernity are conceived and imagined in the current political and economic context of China.

Museum of the Former Korean Provisional Government

A more globally oriented historical mapping of Shanghai urban spaces has occurred with sometimes impressive effect. The rediscovery of the historical site of the former Korean Exile Government again shows Shanghai's close links with the modern history of Asian nationalism. The museum resides in a Shikumen house on Madang Road. The Korean government in exile – active between 1926 and 1932 – was organized in April 1919 in Shanghai by Korean patriots in reac-

tion to Japanese suppression of the March 1st Movement, the struggle for Korean independence from Japanese rule. Leading members of the Korean Provisional Government included the national leaders such as Syngman Rhee, An Ch'ang-ho, and Kim Ku (Encyclopedia Britannica Online 2010). The Government was well known for successfully carrying out assassination missions on Japanese political and military personnel in Shanghai in 1932. The bombing attack in Hongkou Park by Korean independence activist Yoon Bong-Gil was aimed at the important attendees who had gathered for Japanese Emperor Hirohito's birthday celebration. The military success in the First Shanghai Incident left two killed and three severely injured; the attack became a symbolic in the Korean narrative of national freedom and independence. Even Chiang Kai-shek spoke highly of Yoon's braveness and nationalist undertaking. Yoon is still remembered by South Korea as a national hero and a monument was also dedicated to him in the Hongkou Park, today Luxun Park. He was executed in Kanazawa, Japan and his remains were transported back to Seoul in 1946 and buried in the Korean National Cemetery. Since 1994, as part of a more systematic preservation of the memory of Korean national resistance, a large amount of capital was put into the renovation of a two-story Shikumen house to produce a well-maintained memorial site for paying homage to this memory. The Museum now receives more than 600 Korean visitors per day and has been visited by three Korean presidents and other high-level politicians, as well as Korean celebrities such as movie stars. It is gloriously called "the Holy Palace of Korean Nationalist Independence Movement".

To compare the list of the expenses used on the renovation project of the museum and a list of Chinese-South Korean diplomatic development chronicles, it is not difficult to understand the relations between the two. In 1992, China finally established diplomatic relations with South Korea after more than forty years of ideological antagonism during the Cold War Era; in 1994, the first 1 million RMB (approximately 125,000 USD) was released to launch the renovation. The successive three years saw on average 600,000 RMB put into further maintenance each year. In 1998, the Korean president at that time, Kim Dae-jung, made a state visit to China. Two years later, Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji visited South Korea. The largest expenditure in the restoration of the Museum in 2001-2002 coincided with the occasion of Korean President Roh Moo-hyun's state visit to China in 2003, costing a total of 65 million RMB. Furthermore, those two years also witnessed urban renewal in the nearby area, including the large-scale renovation of the relics of the first national congress site and the development of the Taipingqiao project. These memorials are therefore speaking more willingly to the cosmopolitan aspirations of Shanghai rather than China's own national discourse – not only the building a new global image of the city by selectively exploring its cultural and historical legacies but also a marginalization of other narratives of Chinese resistance to the Japanese aggression during the same period of time, e.g. the anti-Japanese Salvation Movement in 1931-1932. Again, in the explanatory

texts shown in the museum, the ambiguous term "Chinese Government" instead of Nationalist or Republican Government appears all the way through the narrative.

The Jewish Refugees Museum

If the cosmopolitan modernity of Shanghai is for the Shanghai local a matter of suturing the ruptures of time, then from a global perspective it is a matter of suturing the ruptures of space. Shanghai was not simply involved with the modern political movements of East Asia; it was also an indispensible part of inhuman battlefield of the world war. The north Bund area in the Hongkou District is now proud of its history of being a safe shelter for exiled Jews. As the rest of the world closed its doors to the refugees, Shanghai as well as several Northeastern Chinese cities, provided a place of free entry. In a country where anti-Semitism was hardly known, the Tilanqiao area in the old Shanghai Hongkew (now Hongkou) became the only place in the world that offered haven for the Jews all the way from central Europe to East Asia. The total number of Jewish refugees in Shanghai during World War II is estimated to be around 30,000. A difficult but somehow harmonious picture of the life of Shanghai Jews within their own community and their warm friendship with local Shanghai residents has been emerging in books written by Shanghai local scholars and in memoirs written by the refugees. Nostalgic trips back to Hongkou are organized annually by local institutions such as the Shanghai Jewish Center. The Center also conducts research on Sino-Jewish history and rela-

tions, is equipped with a library of several thousand books and archives of the Jews of China, provides classes in Hebrew and produces films and television programs (Shanghai Jewish Center 2008). A local TV station has also made the documentary film "Fleeing to Shanghai" to inform the Shanghai people of their absent memory of the friendship with the Jews, "thereby introducing this history and the themes of their cosmopolitan humanitarianism to the local population" (Jakubowicz 2009: 165). This renewed interest in this period of Shanghai's history reached its culmination with the decision by the municipal government of Shanghai in 1998 that the former Ohel Rachel synagogue, still the largest remaining synagogue in the Far East, would be extensively renovated and reopened. While Ohel Rachel has received important politicians such as the former Chancellor of Germany and Hillary Clinton, the other Synagogue in Shanghai, the Ohel Moishe Synagogue, has been turned into The Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum. In 1994, a memorial dedicated to the Jewish refugees was erected in Huoshan Park where they often gathered (Dai & Zhou 2006: 178-84). The Jewish Museum has been fully repaired since 2007 and is open to the public. More than 1 million USD was allocated to the renovation. The exhibition is modern and well equipped, featuring around 140 picture materials, a multimedia installation and a rich collection of artistic works relevant to the Jewish experience in Shanghai.

Again, the motivation to re-discover the cosmopolitanism of Shanghai does not entirely reveal an interest in understanding the city's multi-layered past as such. The memory of the city is articulated always in reaction to the immediate needs of the political or economic situation. China and Israel established diplomatic relations in 1992, and "in the mid-1990s, the Shanghai authorities began to notice increasing pressure to recognize the Jewish history of the city" (Jakubowicz 2009: 165). The salvation of urban memory has become a tool in international diplomacy rather than a mode of public participation by the people of Shanghai. Like many other religious relics in China, the restoration of the physical structure doesn't result in the restoration of the events that once took place in the space. "Despite the narrative of an *ab initio* humanitarian impulse in China, being Jewish is not an acceptable ongoing identity for Chinese nationals. Judaism is not a recognized religion in China" (Jakubowicz 2009: 165). Even for those local residents who have an interest in visiting the site, the 50 RMB (around 5 Euro) entrance fee of the Museum, is expensive for many Chinese visiting a museum that is of limited scale and may thwart a good many of them. The staff at the ticket office frankly suggested that the majority of the visitors were western tourists, and only during peak tourist season. Administrated by the Foreign Affairs Office in Hongkou District, the museum is obviously not intended for a local audience. As the scholars of Shanghai Social Science Academy argue, this part of Shanghai history can be served as "a unique 'cultural name card' for Shanghai in foreign communication and exchange", suggesting its nature of showcase for a global audience (Dai & Zhou 2006: 181). At the same time, other endeavors to explore

the contested meanings of the terrain have not been very successful. For example, the efforts of the Shanghai-Toronto based corporation Living Bridge were intended to re-establish a communal environment, instead of simply the "gentrification" of individual architecture, and to create several other historic sites and cultural facilities in the Tilanqiao area as a part of the North Bund Project (Jakubowicz 2009: 167-170). These and other projects between 2004 and 2005 remained on paper. The official management of the space aims only to make use of the site of memory within its own pragmatic framework. The neglect of Shanghai's own war memories contrasts sharply with the application to make the Tilanqiao Area, as the historic site of Jewish refugees in China, a UNESCO heritage site. The urban memory that celebrates the war memory of others is ironically treated with more passion and attention than that of its own. The yearning for a connection to the global community seems to go beyond the loyalty to the nation-state and assumes a kind of cosmopolitanism. However, as I have tried to illustrate, this cosmopolitanism serves as a façade that tends to reduce the complexity of Shanghai and its relation to plural national histories and memory discourses.

Shanghai in Bifurcated History: City, Multiple Narrative and National Memory

As Duara argues "new meanings are not simply exchanged for old meanings; they are also justified or understood in terms of old meanings" (Duara 1995: 234), I have endeavored to illustrate three situations in which the national subject of history is transformed through different narratives of monuments and commemorative rituals. To begin with, the subject of the political party (here the CPC) is emphasized and actually takes the place of the national subject in the historical narrative of nation building. In the case of The Memorial House of the First National Congress of the CPC, the consistency of the representation of national history is achieved firstly by an articulation of the leading position of the CPC even before the establishment of the new nation-state. As a result, the histories and memories of the other practices in the space are largely repressed and appropriated. Particularly after the "critical juncture" at the end of the Cultural Revolution (1978), an alteration of the meaning of the space that may contradict that of its original has been smoothed over in the renewed narrative.

Secondly, the multiplicity of the national subject of history is denied, marginalized and forgotten in the service of current political agendas. The amnesia of the Sino-Japanese War experience and the downplaying of sites of memory suggests that the national subject of history can be internally antagonistic. The repression of war memories is realized by marginalizing or blurring other historical subjects of the nation such as the Nationalist Government. The absence of WWII memorials allows the glossing over of the more complicated aspects of local history and the eagerness of today's China to be recognized in the global gaze. Ideological

shifts and pragmatic accommodations are all blurred under the name of the national subject.

Thirdly, cosmopolitanism and universal humanitarianism are utilized as a means of blurring other national subjects as well as strengthening China's current political agenda of prioritizing economic development. The image making of Shanghai's cosmopolitanism in the commemoration of the Korean nationalist movement and the exile of Jewish refugees seems to go beyond the national subject in its articulation of local history. But the top-down unilateral and politically motivated process of creating memorials that excludes local people and other, multiple voice from participation in commemorative initiatives ends in the impoverishment memory itself.

These case studies of Shanghai's memorial sites reveal how difficult it is to neatly categorize them in a linear development of progressive modernity. They exemplify the tension between the different temporalities of Chinese national memories. Since the economic rise of Shanghai in the 1990s, the enthusiasm for new rounds of urban design and development for the most modern city in China has re-invoked the nostalgia for individual memories of the everyday bourgeois life style of old Shanghai. Nostalgia for old Shanghai seems to overshadow the memory of urban society's role in national ideology and its transformations. The once rigid party line against urban capitalism, the demonization of the city's decadence, and above all Shanghai's (and city's) long-term peripheral position in Chinese historical discourse appears to have been replaced by a new central position for the urban in post-reform economic development. Nevertheless, commemorative spaces in Shanghai still hold strong sway over the city's major memory narrative, one that maintains its legitimacy based on a continuation of socialist orthodoxy. The narrative of the rapid modernization of the Shanghai cityscape leading to a bright future renders invisible the tension-ridden and still unraveled discourse of the relations between Chinese modernity and its national identity. The constant shift in its ideological discourse is therefore at constant play with the actual production of commemorative spaces vis-à-vis the construction of national identity and awareness. Monumental desires are caught in modernity's dilemma of being for and against the search for origins.

Lü Pan earned her PhD in Comparative Literature from The University of Hong Kong. Her dissertation compares the narratives of spatial memory in Berlin and Shanghai. She is now a visiting fellow in Harvard-Yenching Institute (2011-12). Her research interests include urban visual culture, memory politics, global modernity, and media studies. E-mail: lupan@fasmail.harvard.edu; pingupan@gmail.com

Notes

1 See more in Forest and Johnson, "The first category, Co-opted/Glorified, contains those sites which Russian political leaders have chosen to expend considerable resources on redefining and reincorporating into prominent public view since 1991. (530)… The second category, Contested, contains Soviet-era monuments that continued to be a source of major conflict among the various political groups in Moscow espousing contrasting ideas of national identity. (532)…The third category, Disavowed, encompasses those monuments that were removed, closed, or so changed that their original symbolism was eradicated. (534)"

2 Disgraced Monuments (1996) is a documentary film co-directed by Laura Mulvey and Mark Lewis. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the monuments that were dedicated to the Communist ideological propaganda were largely demolished in the then widespread anti-communist commotion.

3 In the first place, Duara's approach to understanding history challenges the Hegelian Subject of history that privileges the self-awakening of the modern nation-state. For Duara, the Subject of history includes the nation but transverses it. The Historical Subject, which unifies race, nation and History, constitutes itself as "a homogenous community (race) within a territorial state (nation) that had evolved into the present so that it was now poised to launch into a modern future (History) of rationality and self-consciousness in which contingency or history itself would be eliminated (end of History)" (Duara 1995: 48-49). To focus history merely on the national Subject enormously simplifies the internal differences of a nationalism discourse. Duara suggests that national identity is one of the other social identities that simultaneously exist in the process of constituting historical experience. Secondly, as far as historical development is concerned, Duara argues an evolutionary concept of linear history progress poises a paradox in the claiming of nationalism as characteristic of modernity. While the nation is characterized as "representing a radical discontinuity with the past" (Duara 1995: 51), "national history secures for the contested and contingent nation the false unity of a self-same, national subject evolving through time. This reified history derives from the linear, teleological model of Enlightenment History …It allows the nation-state to see itself as a unique form of community which finds its place in the oppositions between tradition and modernity, hierarchy and equality, empire and nation" (Duara 1995: 4). The paradox thus lies in nation-state's claim of its novelty and its legitimacy originating from an earlier tradition. The myth of eternal progression is realized by the narrative "The subject of History is a metaphysical unity devised to address the aporias in the experience of linear time: the disjuncture between past and present as well as the non-meeting between time as flux and time as eternal" (Duara 1995: 29). Historical periodization, for example, is easily manipulated by certain ideology in its own invented rhetoric to create objectivity. Time Concept of History is for Duara multi-layered rather than linear. In this sense, thirdly, Duara rejects the causal relation in historical logic and reasoning. In his conceptualization of the bifurcation of history, and he argues, " (B)ifurcated history not only substitutes multiplicity for the evolution of the same, it denies that the movement of history is causally linear, that only antecedent causes produce effects within a cause-effect chain. It views history as transactional, where the present, by appropriating, repressing, and reconstituting dispersed meanings of the past, also reproduces the past. At the same time, in investigating the process of appropriation, bifurcated history seeks not only to evoke the dispersed meaning but to disclose the ways in which this past may have provided the cause, the conditions, or the affinities which enabled the transformation" (Duara 1995: 233-234). The repression of other pasts is achieved by writing the historical narrative to produce the sense of a stable relation between the past and the present. Therefore the fourth argument centers on the discourse and narrative analysis of the hegemonic version of history. To deconstruct the process, in which "(a)n appropriation of the past often reveals traces or influences of this past for a while, but occasionally, a trace may be entirely erased or rewritten within an astonishingly short period of time for reasons that still need to be fully explored" (Duara 1995: 234), is important in that it helps us to know more about human experience (Wei 2006: 75-80). Duara calls the tensions and dynamics between narratives of the past and

the present the "transaction" of history. By exploring the transactions, one can "acquire the power of rhetorical persuasion even though they conceal, repress, and abstract from dispersed histories" (235). In other words, he tries to understand history by exposing the cleavage between signifier and signified in discourse analysis and thus his focus is "less on the falsehoods of nationalist historical writing than on the narrative structure of this historiography shares several assumptions of a linear history with evolving subject or a causal model" (Duara 1995: 233).

4 The Xinhai Revolution refers to the series of Chinese nation-wide revolutions which overthrew the Qing Monarchy. As a result, the Chinese Republican regime was established in 1912. Sun Yan-sen was the first president of the provisional central government of the Republic of China.

5 Fights for court laws, right to the administration of the concession, right to control railway, mine resources and customs duty were matters of no triviality that were directly connected to national interest and sovereignty. From 1905 to 1911, each year had witnessed large-scale mass protests of such kind in Shanghai. Urban elites, especially the bourgeois influence on Chinese politics soared in the early twentieth century. However, the gulf between Chinese coastal cities and the interior areas, which always play a decisive role in the country's fate, didn't keep China's efforts to modernize the regional areas (Bergère 1994, 52-53; 2005, 114). The process of revolution in Shanghai reveals its uniqueness as a modern city ahead of the rest of China. The short-lived modernization and local political autonomy set a role model for other parts of China. But the central authority had to be restored when this local revolution became hopeless in face of the reality of China. Being different from the more outgoing southern Canton, Shanghai's fate has always been in pace with the nation (Bergère 2005, 124).

6 While the official rendition of major labor movement such as the May Thirtieth Movement underlines the mobilization by the CCP as a leading figure who possessed earlier awareness of the need to stage a struggle for more rights and equality, other research findings, such as those by American historian Elisabeth Perry, showed, in contrast, that the success to mobilize the workers was more geopolitically dependent and regionally culture-based (Perry 2001). This research unfolds a more diverse picture of labor movement in Shanghai, which pays more attention to its metropolitan condition. Like other rapidly growing big cities, Shanghai at that time consisted of migrant workers from different parts of the country. Mass solidarity thus involves not only the matter of class but also issues of negotiating among strong regional identities, distinctive cultural differences and conflicts. Other challenges to CCP's capacity to mobilize workers came from the Nationalist Party and the secret societies, another influential political force in Shanghai (Bergère 2005, 156-157).

7 The "Gang of Four" refers to four Chinese Communist Party officials that formed the leading political group during the Cultural Revolution in China (1966-1976). With enormous power wielded through the latter stages of this turbulent political movement, they are seen as the major culprits who caused huge national political and human right disasters. They were subsequently charged with a series of treasonous crimes. The members consisted of Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen.

8 Zhu 336, my own translation

9 Netizens' comments on the demolition of Gu Zhenghong Monument, http://view.home.news.cn/comment?newsid=5190393&page=3

10 Si Hang, meaning "Four Banks" in Chinese, refers to Jincheng, Dalu, Yanye and Zhongnan banks in the 1930s. The warehouse was in the south of Zhabei District and was once the biggest and tallest piece of modern architecture in the nearby area.

11 The construction of Chinese identity in Taiwan in the postwar years has its own controversial discourse especially when it is related to the dictatorship of KMT government in Taiwan and the conflicts between the postwar migrants from Mainland and the original residents in Taiwan (including the Aborigines). Today's national identity in Taiwan is still problematically divided into ambivalent categories among Chinese, Taiwanese, neither or both.

12 Also see Hu Ed. (2006), 66-67

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Celebrating the International, Disremembering Shanghai: The Curious Case of the Shanghai International Film Festival

By Ma Ran

Abstract

The state-sanctioned *Shanghai International Film Festival* (SIFF) is the only film festival accredited by the *Fédération Internationale des Associations de Producteurs de Films* (FIAPF) in the Greater China region. This paper intends to explore the perceived paradoxes of the SIFF by approaching its vaguely defined vision of "being international/internationalization" (or *guojihua*). The vision of *guojihua* has, at best, fuelled the persistent efforts of the SIFF to emulate the globally standardized festival framework and redirect the global capital flow into its newly installed film market. On the other hand, the SIFF has been reluctant to use one of its most precious cultural legacies – the cosmopolitanism of the Republican era – as a branding resource. The main argument is that the weakened connection between the SIFF and its locality/cultural memory is not only a result of the superficial understanding of *guojihua*, but also of the fact that the central and the local government often hold conflicting ideas regarding the social engineering of Shanghai's image.

Keywords: Shanghai International Film Festival (SIFF), festival programming, "being international/internationalization" (*guojihua*), global city, cosmopolitanism

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The Birth of SIFF: Achieving International Recognition

The Shanghai International Film Festival (SIFF) was established in 1993 under the supervision of the Film Bureau of the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT), the municipal government of Shanghai, and its co-hosting organizers, including the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture, Radio, Film & TV and the Shanghai Media & Entertainment Group (SMEG, *Shanghai Wenguang Chuanmei Jituan*).[1] Between 1993 and 2003, the SIFF was conducted as a biennial event. However, the festival has been held annually since its 7th edition in 2004. Since 1986, the steering committee of the SIFF has shared its administrative staff with the Shanghai TV Festival (*Shanghai Dianshijie* or STVF) under the Office of Major International Events (*Guoji Daxinghuodong Ban'gongshi*) of the SMEG. It is within this marketized or commercialized cultural terrain that film festivals or exhibitions of similar nature were first introduced into the PRC, specifically in the Northeastern city Changchun in Jilin Province as well as the coastal city Zhuhai in Guangdong Province, which launched their film festivals in 1992 and 1994 respectively. In the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen incident, which gave rise to the re-territorialization of the PRC's socio-cultural and economic scenario as well as the Party-state's unequivocal emphasis upon economic development, cultural industries in the PRC was "for the first time, placed on the front lines of economic restructuring" (McGrath 2008: 3). Although I would be hesitant in labelling post-1989 China as "neoliberal" or consider the status quo "neoliberalism-in-disguise," Ong and Zhang's viewpoints concerning the neoliberal condition in postsocialist China are useful in grasping the socio-economic scenario within which the SIFF came into being. They argue that, "the cross between privatization and socialist rule is not a 'deviant' form but a particular articulation of neoliberalism, which we call 'socialism from afar.'" Refuting claims that "socialist rule is dead in China" or that "China is becoming a variant of Western models of neoliberalism," they posit that "postsocialism in China denotes a reanimation of state socialism realized through a strategy of ruling from afar" (Ong & Zhang 2008: 4).

Indeed, the timing of the SIFF's establishment coincided with several pivotal events in PRC's economic reform history. Early in the spring of 1992, Deng Xiaoping's *Southern Tour* and his many speeches outlined the Party's guidelines for implementing economic reform. Deng's speeches "signalled a new, more friendly political climate for rapid capital accumulation and the development of mass consumption." In addition, "this new biopolitical regime de-totalized socialist society by reconfiguring socialist power in relation to self-enterprising powers" (Ong & Zhang 2008: 14). As McGrath argues, "in the Fourteenth Party Congress later in 1992, the 'socialist market economy' became the official label for the new organization of social resources, and various policies were instituted to extend market reforms to new areas of the economy" (2008: 3). Following these state-

ments, it is not surprising that in 1993, a crucial policy was launched to facilitate the commercialization of China's film industry.

This was guided by the specific aim of dissolving the existing stiff industrial hierarchy, with only the notorious China Film Group Corporation (or CFGC, *Zhongying Jituan Gongsi*)[2] in charge of the distribution of all domestically produced feature films. At the same time it placed increased emphasis on the economic potential of the film industry. During the subsequent wave of emulating foreign film festivals in Mainland China at Changchun and Zhuhai – both of which failed – local governments tended to equate a film festival to any other cultural event/showcase that could help boost the local cultural industry and bring potential economic profit. Organizers and policy/decision-makers have failed to realize that a film festival is not just any cultural event that can be quickly and easily installed and staged. Simply imitating the bare format of a film festival ignores the cultural-historical depth out of which this specific cultural institution emerges, just as the "cinephilia" dimension of the film festival is often times least taken into account. Held in a socialist state, which has been intensively incorporated into the global capitalist market, a Chinese film festival itself constitutes an intriguing text through which we can observe how the different parties in the power structure contest with each other as they find their relations being reconfigured.

Let's switch focus to the global terrain. In the 1990s, film festivals, featuring a wide spectrum of themes as well as cultural and political orientations, proliferated throughout the world. De Valck calls this historical stage of film festival development "the third period," during which "the festival phenomenon is sweepingly professionalized and institutionalized" (2007: 20). The establishment of the major film festivals in China in the early 1990s could be regarded as part of this global festival wave. Nevertheless, the Chinese film festivals, with their own ideological constraints and operational forbidden zones, at that time still lagged behind the more mature film festivals with regard to international influence. Commenting on the Kalovy Vary International Film Festival, which originated in the former socialist state of Czechoslovakia in 1946, Iordanova evinces that "profitability was not the key concern of the state socialist management of culture" (2006: 27). Her comment is not outmoded at all if applied to the film festival economy of PRC. Despite the transformation of the regulatory climate in the 1990s, for the SIFF and other domestic film festivals, profitability is not actually prioritized. The State still firmly supervises and controls the operations and functions of these cultural events as its regulation and intervention take up seemingly diverse forms. For example, sponsors and commercial partners have been sought to fund the Shanghai festival but still the organization committee typically consists of government officials, whose presence is deemed necessary to guarantee that the film festival is orchestrated within the guidelines delineated by the CCP authorities. The birth of the SIFF was partially accelerated by the acknowledgment of the Fifth Generation

filmmakers in the world film community at major Western film festivals—a recognition gained from victories attained in prestigious film awards abroad. In boosting national pride, the success of the Fifth Generation led the Chinese to believe they are capable of playing an active role in developing global film culture by hosting an international film festival.

Upon its establishment, the SIFF was quickly accredited by the *Fédération Internationale des Associations de Producteurs de Films*, (FIAPF, est. 1933) during its 1993 convention at the Cannes Film Festival. This accreditation proved to be the first crucial step, which allowed the SIFF to gain international recognition. According to the FIAPF's chief executive:

> To receive a FIAPF accreditation, a new festival must first show evidence of compliance with the standards laid out in the FIAPF regulations for international film festivals. […] New applicants first receive affiliate status for an initial period of two years, during which their commitment to the regulations is assessed. (qtd. in Iordanova 2006: 29)

Classified as one of the 12 A-category film festivals, including the most prestigious ones (e.g., Cannes, Berlin, and Venice), the SIFF was initially doubted by the international community with regards to its mysterious accreditation and classification as an A-festival. Undoubtedly, the FIAPF's A-festival standards and regulations have served as a means of upgrading the SIFF and thus enhancing its leading status in Chinese-language film communities At the same time, the high-profile accreditation has also shrouded SIFF with the grandeur of simply "being international" (*guojihua*).

At the 6th SIFF held in 2002, Phyllis Mollet, Director of the Communications and Film Festivals of the FIAPF, emphasized in an interview with the Chinese media that an A-festival only indicated a category, rather than a ranking that guaranteed superiority (2002). As Iordanova explains, "An A-festival must run for at least nine days; it should not specialize but should cover all aspects of filmmaking; [and] a feature competition with at least fourteen films without genre limitations is a requirement"(2006: 28). All of these seemed rather neutral and feasible targets.

Nonetheless, if we examine the 76-year history of FIAPF, it is easy to see that the A-category has been originally associated with the hierarchy and level of recognition involved in tradition-entrenched international film festivals. For example, classified as category A festivals at an earlier stage, the Cannes and Venice film festivals were given "the right to form an international jury for their prestigious awards" (de Valck 2007: 54). Meanwhile, the accreditation policy for the FIAPF's film festivals has been intricately related to changes in regional geopolitics and global political climate. Later on, the FIAPF revised its much controversial and outmoded A-category into a more technically worded, "Competition Feature Film Festivals." Despite this change, the SIFF still utilizes its "A-festival" status in promotional campaigns in recent years. However, in 2002, FIAPF's Mollet acknowledged that SIFF was still young compared with both Venice and

Cannes; she also pointed out several aspects that compromised the festival's A-category status, such as the negligible number of foreign press, the disappointing number of screened Chinese films, the bleak scene of empty seats during screenings, and recurring problems with English subtitles, to name a few (2002).

Putting the "Big Three" and SIFF's tricky association with FIAPF's "A-list" aside, parallels could be drawn between the SIFF and the international film festivals at Kalovy Vary (est. 1946) and Moscow (est. 1959). Both were established in the Cold War Era and underwent respective transformations since the 1990s, which coincided with a drastically changed social and political climate. According to de Valck, when the film festival in Moscow was established in 1959, "the Soviet diplomatic dominance became apparent once more" for the Moscow festival "was immediately granted 'A' category status by the FIAPF," and eventually, "the political decision to offer only one 'A' festival annually in the communist countries soon followed" (2007: 57). Iordanova posits that as one of the oldest film festivals in the world "over the cold war period," the Kalovy Vary fest "was one of the key cultural events in the Soviet sphere, distributing a number of politically correct awards and attracting a host of 'progressive' international film-makers" (2008: 26). Iordanova's inquiry into Kalovy Vary's rivalry with a Prague-based film festival (the Golden Golem) for FIAPF's "A-category" approval in the post-communist Czech Republic and her interpretation of Kalovy Vary's final victory offer insights in examining the dynamic nature of China's film festivals. Iordanova reads the showdown between Kalovy Vary and Prague as a rivalry of cultural entrepreneurship, which is a result of the State giving up the centralized management of culture. She perceptively argues that "the real battle was not one between art and commerce nor between refined tradition and disrespectful free enterprise…the battle was between two events that depended almost entirely on commercial sponsors in a callous laissez-faire environment where the government, previously controlling, was seeking a way out" (2006: 32).

Nevertheless in the case of the SIFF, the sociopolitical climate could be better described as "postsocialist" but definitely not yet "post-communist." Upon its inception, the SIFF has become the only festival held in a socialist nation among the 12 former A-list film festivals. However, as a cultural event primarily envisioned as the rejuvenation of the splendid film culture and cinematic legacy of Shanghai, the SIFF actually operates in a bizarre hybrid logic of postsocialism, inhabiting the gray areas between the centralized will of the Party-state, a range of ideology-laden and ambiguously-termed cultural policies, and the discourse of the new millennium's cosmopolitan Shanghai indexing China's ambition to reinstate itself into the global economy (Abbas 2000: 779).

The Global City of Shanghai: SIFF as the Symptom

In this section, I will further critique the "international" vision of SIFF by discussing the notion of a Cosmopolitan Shanghai and the city's aspiration to be a self-made "Global City," rivalling other global hubs such as New York, Tokyo, London, and Hong Kong. The SIFF's obsession with internationalization or *guojihua* parallels the prevalent and somehow clichéd discourse of globalization (*quanqiuhua*), in which the challenges faced by postsocialist modernity are presented as a global socioeconomic condition (see McGrath 2008). In light of Abbas' arguments about the cosmopolitanism of both Shanghai and Hong Kong, such a yearning for *guojihua* registers a rather more superficial understanding of that cosmopolitanism associated with the former city's pre-1949 historical status as the unusual site of colonial extraterritoriality (Abbas 2000: 774).

In an interview with SINA.COM.CN, the Vice Executive Secretary General of the SIFF Organizing Committee, Tang Lijun (also a government official of Shanghai), admitted that their articulation of "being international" was a bit ambiguous. Instead she suggested that they considered "diversification" (*duoyuan*) as an interchangeable term, which was no less fuzzily defined by the spokeswoman. However, Tang managed to outline the standards of "being international." First, the competition films come from various countries; second, at the SIFF, there are many levels for the training of new film talent, because they are selected globally (in addition, the films selected for the student film competition also come from all over the world); third, there are many countries participating in the film projects' "Catch & Pitch," as well as the market of film co-production; and finally, the stars participating in the film festival are from both China and overseas (Tang 2009). This definition simply identifies *guojihua* with a cultural event in which "many countries" participate; however, this is a kind of naiveté that shrinks the global dimension of the SIFF to its mere face value.

In his research on the film festival phenomenon and global cities, Stringer proposes that "while the establishment of events like Berlin, Cannes and Venice in the postwar period signalled that the balance of power was shifting in the new world order, the rise of film festivals on a global scale since the 1980s is implicated, too, in the restructuring of an alternative social object, namely the modern city" (2002: 136). Considering the film festival circuit as an inherently hierarchical configuration, Stringer contends that the circuit itself is regulated through the rivalry and competition existing among individual film festivals. Moreover, this rejuvenation has also been achieved through the establishment of new film festivals. For Stringer, "the international film festival circuit" suggests the "existence of a socially produced space unto itself," which constitutes "a unique cultural arena that acts as a contact zone for the working-through of unevenly differentiated power relationships," while cities rather than national film industries "act as nodal points on this circuit" (2002: 138). Further, he believes that many film festivals that "aspire to the status of a global event," would do so "both through the implementa-

tion of their programming strategies and through the establishment of an international reach and reputation."

When the host cities of film festivals had identified rivalry logic as such, they would compete or cooperate with each other "at a variety of different levels on the basis of a range of differing administrative, governmental, and cultural and political activist concerns" (Stinger 2002: 139). To further contextualize Stringer's arguments, it is easy to see why the Hong Kong International Film Festival, widely considered as the most competitive rival of the Busan International Film Festival regionally, has introduced flagship events, such as the 'Film Market' and 'Asian Film Awards', in recent editions by referring to the HKSAR government's vision of Hong Kong as "Asia's World City." Moreover, it has also repackaged its vision as the main promoter of Chinese-language cinema directly competing against Busan's bid to be considered as "The Hub of Asian Cinema."

As for Shanghai, the latest officially endorsed volumes, entitled *Shanghai, the Transformation of the City And its Prospects* (Zhou 2010), were published to coincide with the Shanghai 2010 World Expo. Cited in the publication was the desire of local urban planners, researchers, and policy-makers to position the city within a horizontal framework comparable to other global hubs, such as New York, Tokyo, Hong Kong, and London. This can be accomplished by addressing the gaps and suggesting directions for its grand transformation (*shanbian*). Furthermore, it was proposed in the post Reform & Opening-up era—30 years after the policy was initiated in 1978—that Shanghai should be developed into a "Global City" (*Quanqiu Chengshi*). The authors explained that their vision of such a model was built upon the theoretical underpinnings of Saskia Sassen, John Friedman's "World City," and other scholars, such as Manuel Castells and Bruno Latour (Zhou 2010: 1–7). The think tanks of Shanghai's entrepreneurial municipal government continue their assertion of the city as China's future economic, financial, and trading powerhouse. Their formulation of such a "global city" as represented by an international film festival features a full spectrum of cultural events enhancing the city's competitiveness (2010: 7). Having said this, I strongly agree with Berry's reflections on regional film festivals in Asia (Berry 2011). Berry states that within the paradigm of the global city, we could develop further Sassen's sub-categories of global cities that are not only or at all global centres of finance and capital concentration, and add "global cinema cities," as exemplified in the case of Busan, Cannes, or Venice. Berry further contends that international film festivals play a crucial role in networking such global cities together, thus echoing Stringer's arguments as mentioned earlier (2011).

People tend to resort to, and indeed switch between, two different critical lenses when approaching the pros and cons of the SIFF. First, the festival is contextualized within the world film festival system; second, they read the SIFF as a symptom of Shanghai's ambition to emerge as one of the global hubs and so demonstrate the nation's rising economy. The SIFF itself regards the accreditation by

FIAPF as adequate criteria for legitimizing its international status. Still, people attempt to examine its degree of internationalization in these two ways. First, they juxtapose it with the more prestigious festivals held at Cannes, Berlin, Venice, and Busan. Second, they scrutinize whether or not the film festival matches up to an ideal projection of 'cosmopolitan Shanghai'.

In the news commentary from the weblog, *China Herald*, entitled C*an Shanghai Host an International Event?*, blogger Fons Tuinstra complains about how messy it could be when Chinese megacities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, host real international events (2008). Using the 11th SIFF in 2008 as an example of China's attempt to showcase its capability to impress the world with an international gala, Tuinstra lamented that the film festival was not international at all. The evidence included the presence of few international new agencies and representatives, except for the *Hollywood Reporter* (which in 2009 cooperated with the SIFF in publishing its official festival daily). Tuinstra, however, was wrong because in the Shanghai festival in 2008, *Variety* indeed sent in their film critic, Derek Elley, to review several Chinese film titles.

Somehow, when the prestige of an international film festival is proportionally related to the international press attending the event, the SIFF would not be as confident or as eager to disclose the number of its foreign journalists as it would for the red carpet eye-candies. At the same time, except for the film festival's online media collaborator SOHU.COM, most leading media in China (such as SOHU's competitor SINA.COM.CN) are not quite comfortable with the slow progress of the SIFF in recent years. Those media outlets frequently send out teams covering film festivals at Cannes, Venice, and Berlin around the festival calendar. This gap between the Chinese festival and its overseas counterparts is too obvious to ignore, and the sarcastic voices regarding the festival's disqualification never seem to tone down. Many aspects provided ammunition to criticize the SIFF. At the closing of the 11th SIFF, *China Daily* came out with a concluding commentary entitled *Shanghai Film Fest a Far Cry from Cannes.* As stated in the commentary, "Cannes makes a name for its festival based on reliability; Berlin sets itself apart for its devotion to pushing serious films; and Venice is known for welcoming aspiring art hopefuls. In Asia, there is strong government support behind the Pusan film festival, but it is the retrospective screening session of Hong Kong's festival that is still the best on the continent." The article cites the Taiwanese film producer and promoter of Chinese independent cinema, Peggy Chiao who states that "Shanghai is one of the most concerned cities in the world, which works for hosting a film festival… but, who you are is important. All successful film festivals have their distinctive orientations" (China Daily 2008). Based on the above, the arguments in this current paper can be extended to the problems of SIFF's programming, which is a crucial indicator of a film festival's self-positioning and identity. The festival officials also agree that this is regrettably unclear and superficial – as shown in their inner circulated documents (SMEG

2006: 17). What may have complicated the discussion are the SIFF's postsocialist idiosyncrasies, especially when relevant official data and documents, both concerning the festival programming strategies and the city's urban/culture policies, are not accessible nor transparent.

Marijke de Valck, ruminating on the Rotterdam International Film Festival, writes, "From roughly 1971 onwards, programming became the core business of film festivals worldwide. The format of the showcase of national cinemas was abandoned and, instead of a National Film Funds, the film festivals took it upon themselves to select films for the festival screenings." Accordingly, "the programmers focused on established auteurs, new discoveries (such as new waves in national cinemas), and/or the film-historical canon" (de Valck 2007: 167). Nevertheless, the SIFF has no officially appointed director or programmers who would enjoy autonomy in their work as delineated by de Valck. Even if they participated in the programming, their names cannot be disclosed to the public for unknown reasons. As illustrated previously, the SIFF's Organizing Committee (hereafter called OC) predominantly consists of CPC officials/cadres.[3]

In an interview with SINA.COM.CN, spokeswoman Tang Lijun explained the festival's programming section's functions and admitted that there were behind-the-scene programmers. According to Tang, the SIFF has a team of around 10 people responsible for selecting films submitted worldwide for the first round mainly through "group discussion." The team members come from various backgrounds, including industry people, film critics, journalists, and others working in related fields. The festival itself also has several young professionals as full-time employees, who are responsible for scouting and programming films. However, these scouts have no say in acquiring any film unless the order is clearly delivered from the higher-ranked officials.[4] Apart from these professionals, the SIFF has consultants from Asia, Europe, and America who recommend films to the OC. Overseas companies, such as Germany's *Universum Film A.G.* (UFA), Italy's *Cinecittà*, and the *Korean Film Council* (KOFIC), have also kept close ties with the film festival. Nevertheless, according to an anonymous interviewee familiar with the programming flow, despite the work of the programming team, domestically hired professional people still do not have the final say in including/excluding a certain film at the SIFF either.[5]

When asked what the SIFF's programming rationales are, its spokeswoman provided an outline of the OC's rationale by saying that first, they select films that maintain the delicate balance between commercial and artistic merits, and second, they encourage innovation and actively promote young filmmakers. However, such vague and evasive descriptions have not really underscored anything idiosyncratic about the festival's programming vision, which has been directly reflected in the unconvincing program structure.[6] What may further undermine the international vision of the SIFF is that, despite its high-profile "Industrial Forum" attracting guests from other Asian film industries, such as Singapore, Thailand,

Japan and South Korea, the festival has been slow to include groundbreaking new films from these regions.[7] It is my speculation that the SIFF relies on a line-up of Euro-American films, rather than new Asian films, to highlight its international profile. This suggests that the festival remains ambiguous about its self-positioning within both the regional and the global film festival scenario. Such a preference is also evidenced by the official stance as indicated in the inner-circulated official document, that the SIFF is to be developed into an equal to the film festivals at Berlin and Venice – but not the Busan International Film Festival that is renowned for its Asian titles, for instance (see the Five Year Plan – SMEG 2006) (though in recent editions the SIFF has been trying to install more sidebar events on Asian films). Furthermore, what has hindered the flexibility of programming is the state regulation of the film industry with regards overseas entries for Chinese film festivals, which is briefly delineated in Item No. 35 of the Administration of Films Regulations.[8] This indicates that all overseas films brought to the festival must be evaluated and sanctioned by the SARFT. Overall the perceived lack of prestige, both culturally and economically, hardly gets the SIFF any competitive world premiere. In a concluding festival report on the 12th SIFF (2009), which was based on random questionnaires distributed among the Chinese journalists and critics participating in the festival, journalists of SINA.COM.CN audaciously challenged the SIFF by stating that there were "no films but only a festival" (Zhao 2009). As repeatedly critiqued by both domestic film professionals and audiences, it is ridiculous that the SIFF is not known for its selection of new Chinese films and instead, consistently presents an eclectic bunch of European titles produced in recent years. These, according to Berry, are not going to "set the world on fire" (Berry 2009).[9]

Film critic Mark Peranson demarcates between two models of film – business and audience festivals (Peranson 2008). In turn, this has led Berry (2011) to argue that Peranson's formulation of a business festival can be used to analyse the SIFF – in particular, the strategic role of the SIFF in inscribing the Chinese film industry and its marketing into a global film/media network. Despite its cinephilia undercurrents,[10] however, the Shanghai festival tends to prioritize its film market and role in networking film professionals and facilitating deals with transnational film co-productions. This explains why the programming is not (and indeed cannot be) considered an organic part of the SIFF and why its "international reach and reputation" are not dependent on the line-up of the films but more often integrated into the trite discourse of the nation or the city's amazing growth. For the Chinese authorities, it is the city that would lend the festival the "marketable trademark or brand image," as Stringer terms it. However, the film festival is subject to the State's influence; thus, it cannot attain its own identity and assume autonomy. This underlines the reason why the SIFF is perceived as lacking prestige and authority, which is also reflected in its rather neutral programming strategies (if such strategies exist). As if to testify to the business logic of the festival, the SIFF has

placed much emphasis on nourishing and branding its own film market in recent years. Mainland China, despite its systematic imperfections and the rigid Party-state regulation, is highly regarded as an alluring film market and potential shooting location with regards to its gargantuan population and an open policy towards transnational capital flows.

In its inner circulated file, "On the Brand naming Strategies and Positioning of SIFF" (*Shilun Shanghaiguojidianyingjie De Pinpaizhanlue Yu Dingwei*, 2006), with Tang Lijun as one of its authors, the festival also considered the monopoly of the China Film Group Corporation in acquiring and purchasing foreign films as a considerable barrier preventing the SIFF from nurturing its own film market. In 2006, with a structure based on the former Sino-European Co-production Film Forum, the *Co-production Film Pitch and Catch* (known as Co-FPC) was established, with the aim of executing co-production opportunities globally. A total of 32 projects were selected by the SIFF for pitching in every edition ever since. In 2007, the SIFF integrated the *China Film Pitch and Catch* (known as CFPC) into its film market, with the aim of "promoting rising Chinese filmmakers." Different from the Co-FPC, the CFPC even included a presentation session for its eight chosen projects. During this session, the filmmakers and producers pitched their ideas in front of a jury and a selection of industry people for 15–20 minutes. This was followed by a discussion session with the jury members, after which the audience members were allowed to ask questions.

However with the legitimization of independent films in the PRC since 2004, it became possible for independently-produced films to obtain permits from the SARFT, lightly referred to as the "Dragon Trademark,"[11] and distribute/exhibit their films at domestic cinemas. Thus, it may not be coincidental that since 2004, the SIFF has set up its *Asian New Talent Award* incorporating legitimized Chinese independent (indie) titles such as *South of the Cloud* (*Yun de nanfang*, 2004; Dir. Zhu Wen; the 7th SIFF), *The Silent Holy Stone* (*Jingjing de Manishi*, 2005; Dir. Wanmacaidan; the 9th SIFF), *Trouble Makers* (*Guangrong de Fennu*, 2006; Dir. Cao Baoping; the 9th SIFF), *The Bliss* (*Fusheng*, 2006; Dir. Shengzhimin; the 10th SIFF), *Jalainur* (*Zhalainuo'er*, 2008; Dir. Zhao Ye; the 12th SIFF), and *Mr. Tree* (*Shuxiansheng*; Dir. Han Jie; the 14th SIFF). Independent filmmakers have been highly visible at various aspects of festival events, such as forums, symposiums, and even the pitch forum of CFPC. This has proven to be a convenient option allowing Chinese indie filmmakers to get involved in the festival even though their films are absent from the festival itself.[12] In this way, the SIFF is also following the stance of international film festivals in discovering young film talents and cultivating their dedication and passion for their craft (see also Elsaesser 2005).

Furthermore, the pervading business talk during the festivals is essentially related to Shanghai's drastic socio-economic transformations. This is highlighted by the remarkable success achieved by Pudong since the 1990s, which according to Abbas "comes into being before our eyes like the speeded-up image of [a] time-

lapse film." In understanding the rationale behind Shanghai's developmental projects for cultural modernization, Abbas relates his personal experience of visiting the Shanghai Museum, during which he marveled more at how "meticulously clean" the museum was than at the rare collections it houses. He then jokingly assumes that "the dirtier the streets around it, the cleaner the museum." According to Abbas, the Shanghai museum "does not think of itself as being part of a local space at all, but as part of a virtual global cultural network." Therefore, he proposes that the Shanghai museum also becomes the locale "where Shanghai shows itself off in its museum, with its image cleaned up and in hopes that the world is looking" (2000: 782). Although not necessarily a perfect association, the SIFF indeed represents such a non-place whose *guojihua* reveals the tendency of thinking of itself "as part of a virtual global cultural network," thus explaining why the line-up of mostly non-Chinese films at the SIFF would be compatible with the yearly updated configuration of film festival sidebars and pitch projects modeled after other global festivals. In particular, the red carpet ceremony is staged every year for the possible viewing of a global audience – perhaps, not only to offer the films, but also to showcase the city itself, reminding us of Abbas' perception that, Shanghai, as the city of remake, is "a shot-by-shot reworking of a classic, with the latest technology, a different cast, and a new audience." At the same time, however, the SIFF offers an intriguing example illustrating how self-contradictory it can be when a film festival has the ambition to appear "international" while at the same time holding ambiguous attitudes towards one of its most precious cultural legacies underpinned by both unprecedented internationalism and cosmopolitanism. I shall address these perceived "aporias and anomalies" in the following section.

The SIFF and the Cinematic City

There is a deeper conflict between Shanghai's past and present cinematic preferences, despite the SIFF OC's efforts to glamorize this connection in the officials' celebratory rhetoric. Actually, it was only during the inaugural opening of the SIFF in 1993 that recognition was given to Shanghai Cinema. This includes Chinese film classics from the 1930s, such as Fei Mu's *Spring of a Small Town* (*Xiaocheng zhichun*, 1948) and Wu Yonggang's *The Goddess* (*Nv Shen*, 1934), together with the post-1949 gems produced by the Shanghai Film Studio, such as *Women Demon Human* (*Renguiqing*, dir. Huang Shuqin, 1987), *Hibiscus Town* (*Furongzhen*, 1986) by Xie Jin, and *My Memories of Old Beijing* (*Chengnan Jiushi*, 1982) by Wu Yigong. However, except for the occasional retrospectives of the SIFF to honor the earlier generation of filmmakers, "Shanghai" as a keyword has hardly appeared in the keynote sidebars. Such a programming record can easily be overshadowed by the rich and diverse line-up of classic Shanghai films at the exhibitions of both the Hong Kong Film Archive and Hong Kong International

Film Festival. Furthermore, despite the yearly SIFF screening of the new films produced by the Shanghai Film Group Co., Ltd (i.e., *Shanghai Dianying Jituan*, which is part of the gargantuan group SMEG), they are neither collectively showcased in a section called "Shanghai Panorama," nor are they singled out to highlight their localized aesthetics and sentiments. SIFF's abandonment of the city's cinematic tradition signifies the desire to situate the film festival within the developmental discourse of contemporary Shanghai. Ironically, however, the city in general has been using its Republican era past (1912-49) as a key part of its attempt to regain its cosmopolitan status, what Abbas has called "forward to the past" (2000: 780). Looking back at the early stages of the SIFF, it was a strategic decision for Shanghai to run its film festival after the Propaganda Department's reshuffling of the cultural scene during the early 1990s. For the Party-state, the Shanghai locale of the film festival should not overshadow its national dimension. Equally, integral to its international vision the SIFF has also weakened or even detached its programming from any regional underpinning. Revisiting Shanghai's cinematic past can help us situate the cosmopolitan vision of the SIFF against its elusiveness towards the city's cultural history.

The period of "Shanghai Modern," the city depicted with the vibrant urban culture of the pre-PRC period, is of unparalleled status in the history of modern Chinese cinema. For instance, when Zhang Yingjin edited *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922-1943*, the Chinese cinema in the Republican Era, received academic attention from overseas, prompting Zhang to opine that "film culture, when defined in a specific socio-political context, provides a rich and fascinating site for an archaeology of knowledge in modern China" (1999: 4). Shanghai cinema and the urban culture nourishing it are considered "specific conjunctures of space and time, of text and context, of image and sound, of discourses and practices." Particularly in *"The Urban Milieu of Shanghai Cinema, 1930-40"* Leo Ou-fan Lee presents the sociocultural conditions "in which Chinese cinema came to prominence in the 1930s." In Lee's research, he builds up the relationship between the "emergent film culture" and the distinct modern sensibility that prevailed in 1930s Shanghai (1999: 14). In *Shanghai Dianying Yibainian* (*A Hundred Year of Shanghai Cinema*), Chinese film scholars and co-authors Chen Wenping and Cai Jifu have chronicled the film history of Shanghai since 1896, in which Republican Shanghai's film history is juicily highlighted. Essentially written in a matter-of-fact fashion, the epilogue states, "it can be said that the film history of China prior to 1949 is exactly the film history of Shanghai Cinema…but nowadays it indeed is falling behind…"(Chen & Cai 2007: 458). Aside from the robust development of the film industry, the cinema infrastructure and the cinéphile culture (see Lee 1999), Republican Shanghai undoubtedly constitutes the critical locale of the early transnational interaction between Hollywood cinema and early Chinese films. During the Japanese occupation period (1937-1945), some Shanghai-based film companies and their film stars withdrew to Hong Kong, initiating

new waves of transregional film traffic between Shanghai and Hong Kong, two cities that are socioeconomically and cinematically interdependent. According to Hong Kong film scholar Law Kar, another wave of film professionals' migration between Shanghai and Hong Kong was initiated during the civil war period of 1946-1949, "which significantly added to the luster and vigor of Hong Kong's film industry and made Hong Kong cinema what it is today" (Law 1994: 10). However, in Chen and Cai's account, during 1945-1949, Shanghai again became the epicenter of Chinese cinema when a predominant number of films during this period were produced in Shanghai (2007: 257).

Since the liberation of Shanghai (in May, 1949) and the establishment of PRC, the city's existing film companies and studios, together with the distribution agencies of Hollywood and other foreign companies were "taken-over" (*jieguan*) by the new CCP government. Although the Shanghai Film Studio was founded in November, 1949,[13] several left-wing film companies, such as the Yangtze River Film Company (*Changjiang Yingye Gongsi*) and Kunlun Film Company (*Kunlun Yingye Gongsi*), were characterized as state-private owned. It was not until 1953 that the Shanghai film industry ended its socialist transformation and bid farewell to the era of private enterprise. Incidentally, a new Shanghai Film Studio has been founded since the industry was reshuffled and nationalized. At the same time, the socialist regime also fortified its control over the cultural institutions. According to Yomi Braester, from the founding of the socialist regime in 1949 "a system modeled on the Soviet Union's was installed to oversee production" in the cultural realm. Thenceforth, "films were expected to depict one of three major categories of the subject matter, namely, the lives of workers, of peasants, and of soldiers" (Braester 2008: 124). Significantly, the first feature film (*gushipian*) produced by the Shanghai Film Studio turned out to be a peasant-centered film called *Nong Jia Le* (*The Happiness of Farmers*, 1950). Its story revolved around the demobilized soldier named Zhang Guobao who returned to the rural hometown after his tour of duty.

Undoubtedly, waves of political campaigns with specific agendas served as themes for the PRC's cultural production during Seventeen Years (1949-1966) (See Braester 2005; Chen & Cai 2007). In addition, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) constituted the most traumatic chapter of Shanghai Cinema.[14] Chen Wenping and Cai Jifu consider the era after the end of Cultural Revolution a "new period" of Shanghai cinema. In their work, they highlighted several Shanghai Film Studio-based Third and Fourth Generation filmmakers, such as Xie Jin, Wu Yigong, Yang Yanjin, and Huang Shuqin. Nevertheless, directors from the younger generation, such as Zhou Xiaowen (*Ermo*), Feng Xiaoning (*Super Typhoon*) and Chen Yifei (*Reveries on Old Shanghai*; *The Music Box*), as well as independent arthouse filmmakers Lou Ye (*Suzhou River*, *Summer Palace*) and Peng Xiaolian (*Shanghai Story*), became associated with Shanghai Film Studio in one way or another. Therefore, in a different context, "Shanghai Cinema" *per se* is

more of a historically significant concept than a contemporary functioning one as we study and evaluate current films that are "made in/about Shanghai."

During the Mao era, Shanghai's disconnection with its cinematic past recurred with the red regime's social re-engineering of Shanghai's city image. According to Yomi Braester (2005), this is initiated by the campaign for *Emulating the Good Eighth Company of Nanjing Road* (*Xiang Nanjinglushang Haobalian Xuexi*) in 1963. In prefiguring the arrival of the Cultural Revolution, this campaign has also fortified the authority of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). As suggested by Braester (2008), the common perception of Shanghai runs at opposite extremes. On one hand, the city is portrayed as the "ideological epicenter" that gave birth to the Chinese Communist Party as well as the new organized urban proletariat. On the other hand, the city "has earned the reputation of a metropolis where unchecked economic growth has followed colonial depravity sustained by prostitution, gambling and cinematic illusion". Braester further argues that if the CCP once oscillated between the contradictory perceptions about Shanghai as such, it was "only in the early 1960s that the rhetoric began to disregard class distinctions and identify Shanghai's locales and even its idiom as menaces to the Communist goals" (2008: 412). Basing his research on the declassified internal documents and the cultural analysis of propaganda films, Braester posits that at a later phase of this campaign, Shanghai actually "became a reactionary den that had to be put right before it could join in building socialism" (2005: 412). Thus, visual and performance arts were deployed by the socialist propaganda apparatus to serve and legitimize the causes of the campaign. In *Emulating The Good Eighth Company* movement, the CCP's target was to recode the symbolic meaning of Shanghai and label it with a bourgeois tag to make it essentially incompatible with the socialist enterprise. In this way, the campaign then stood out "among contemporary political movements in addressing Shanghai's urban spaces and shaping the city's symbolic imagery" (2005: 412).

Furthermore, propaganda-based cinematic texts internalized the socialist persuasions of the campaign, such as *Sentinels under the Neon Lights* (*Nihongdeng Xia De Shaobing*, 1964). The fierce battle to take control of the metropolis—as both "a menace to socialism and as the PLA's nemesis"—was metaphorically staged on Nanjing Road, similar to the *lieu de mémoire* of Shanghai Republic and its decadent colonial past. The film has "remodeled the existing stereotypes to fit the political agenda of the 1960s, and in so doing, implied a wholesale condemnation of the city" (2005: 424). At the end of his essay, Braester even mentions two films produced in the 1990s, namely, *Once Upon A Time In Shanghai* (*Shanghai Jishi*, 1998; dir. Peng Xiaolian) and *The Great Combat: The Big Battle Over Ningbo, Shanghai And Hangzhou* (*Dajinjun: Dazhan Ning Hu Hang*, 1999; dir: Wei Lian), both of which, he believes, "attest to the ongoing propaganda effort to rewrite the city's history" (2005: 442-3).

Therefore, we have Abbas stating that "in Shanghai, the past allows the present to pursue the future: hence 'memory' itself is select and fissured, sometimes indistinguishable from amnesia" (2000: 780). Just as the cosmopolitanism featured in Republican Shanghai (labeled as "extraterritoriality" by Abbas) needs to be selectively processed and reconfigured in its modern incarnation, the SIFF has been cautious with the ways by which it is reconnected to Shanghai's cinematic tradition, when the city's history itself remains a subtle and elusive politicized subject susceptible to constant revision and erasure. Therefore, despite the prominent existence of a Shanghai Cinema in the past, the SIFF cannot actually find a comfortable way in which to appropriate its cinematic treasure.

The situation is further exacerbated by the authorities' censorship, which has excluded a large proportion of independent Chinese films, as well as the requirement to accommodate many overproduced, mediocre Chinese films, allowing the screening of non-competitive films from both Asia and Europe. Such a vision of eclecticism is arguably the essential idea behind the SIFF's *guojihua*. On the other hand, juggling its multiple—and sometimes conflicting versions of the forced-upon or appropriated cosmopolitanism—the SIFF plays its confusing role of acting as a transnational subject, which is apparent in the spokesperson's awkwardness and reluctance to answer questions from the media regarding the festival. More examples can be witnessed at the festival venues. During morning and afternoon screenings, it is common to see crowds of audience members consisting of retired people rushing to the films with complimentary tickets possibly given by their previous work units. Moreover, given that the film rating system has not been introduced to the Chinese film industry, young family members or high school students can watch R-rated films, such as the Brazilian action/crime flick *Tropa de Elite* (Elite Squad, 2007).

Conclusion

Among the few inner-circulated documents from 2006, the manual drafted by the SMEG's Office of Major International Events carried an attractive SIFF Five-Year Plan. Although the format of the "Five-Year Plan" recalls the logic of a planned economy, the proposal itself featured a neoliberal utopian vision of Shanghai as the global center of cultural production and urban spectacle. In many ways, this proposal has served as a manual instructing the relevant authorities to transform Shanghai into a global city via the SIFF. In particular, the festival's Great Leap Forward (or "*feiyue*" according to the document) consists of three stages: (1) between 2006 and 2007, (2) between 2008 and 2009; and (3) that which commenced in 2010. The first period is for "nurturing the brand name" (*pinpai peiyu*), which envisions that the functioning and organization of the festival must be further professionalized, and the festival must successfully clarify its position as independent productions become an integral part of the festival. The

SIFF's breakthrough is directly related to the revisions of policies as regards film import quotas, which should favor selected foreign titles at the SIFF. The second stage is for "establishing the brand name" (*pinpai queli*), which would show the SIFF's rising status as the leading film festival in Asia. The third stage sees the further consolidation of the SIFF's brand name, with international reach and influence achieving the same status as those of the Berlin, Venice, and Cannes film festivals. Moreover, the SIFF must become the generator for both Chinese-language film industry and the film industries in Asia (SMEG 2006).

When working on this paper in 2011, I reflected on the outlook of the 2006 SIFF as it projected itself 5 years forward. However, I will not highlight the problems with the effort to enhance the brand name of the festival but rather show how the SIFF's discourse of "leaping forward" is implicated with the territorial aspiration of the entrepreneurial municipal government and the Party-state's more national aspirations. The SIFF has repeatedly addressed the urgency of obtaining the desired support from the SARFT, especially with regards to the nation's film import quota policy, which designates the CFGC as the sole importer of foreign films, posing great challenges to the SIFF's future plan of positioning itself as the hub of Asian film industries. The excruciatingly slow progress that the SIFF has made in contesting the monopoly of the CFGC and relevant film policies raises questions as to how far the SIFF could go in negotiating its global dimension with both the Party-state's overbearing presence. At the same time, though the SIFF is regarded as one of the best opportunities for Shanghai to perform its revived cosmopolitanism, one of the symptoms of "neoliberalism from afar" has been an ever-greater emphasis on business – this has proved inadequate in boosting the festival as a cultural event with due international reach and reputation. It is thus not just the short-sightenedness of the Shanghai municipal government which is at issue but the general emphasis on economic development and the conflicts between city and nation which have made the goal of "leaping forward" – as mapped out in the SIFF's Five-Year Plan – unachievable.

However, after 14 instances of experimentation, the SIFF has also set up a template exemplifying successful state-sanctioned film festivals in postsocialist China. Furthermore, its existence has provided us the opportunity to stage international film festivals. In fact, it is quite obvious that the 1st Beijing International Film Festival (BJIFF) launched in late April 2011 is somehow emulating the SIFF, if not striving to surpass the latter's accomplishments. During the BJIFF launch, *Film Business Asia*'s Stephen Cremin keenly observed that key staff from the SIFF, although invited by their rivals, have obviously been ignored, and "while Beijing rejoiced in its large delegation of festival presidents, there to witness and advise the new event, Shanghai was present but not invited to speak" (2011). The BJIFF's entry as an unexpected newcomer in the Asian film festival scene, which rivals the SIFF, reminds us of Iordanova's observations regarding the heated cultural entrepreneurship rivalry between the two Czech film festivals in the post-

communist era. In a strikingly similar way, the BJIFF has not only staged a star-studded red carpet ceremony and showed off the luxurious cast of guests with festival directors and film professionals, it has also miraculously set up its own film market. *Beijing Film Marketing* has merged with the long-running *Beijing Screening* to target the foreign buyers and festival programmers.

Almost as eagerly as Shanghai, Beijing has exhibited a strong will to gain respect in the capitalist world-system for its optimistic vision of the growth of Chinese cinema. At this self-made spectacle, the capital city of PRC has also managed to clean up its image "in the hope that the world is looking" (Abbas 2000: 782). However, the silent presence of the SIFF at Beijing somehow contrasts strongly with the former's optimistic outlook as delineated in its Five-Year Plan (i.e., to be a leading film festival in Asia, if not the world). It remains to be seen whether or not the influence of the BJIFF can contribute to the capital city's vision as a "world city with Chinese characteristics." It is obvious that the BJIFF has pushed both its business logic and vision of *guojihua* to a great extent, such that while its film market has closed deals worth RMB 2,794 billion. Shockingly, cinéphile and programming discourses are almost non-existent at the festival milieu. This imbalance, by comparison, has made the SIFF's open cosmopolitan outlook more convincing and promising. The year of 2011 marks both the birth of the BJIFF and the re-examination of the SIFF's five-year evolvement (2006-2010). Would the BJIFF represent a new direction that shall allow us to observe the contesting and co-optation between the state power, film art, and the market on the festival circuit? On the other hand, by introducing the highly prestigious *Jin Jue* Award, has the SIFF, by recognizing legitimized independent films, moved closer to its three-step goal of being the top film festival in the world? We shall leave these questions open. Nevertheless, this essay has laid out facts and various perspectives, thus opening up possible directions through which to undertake further discussions on the matter.

Ma Ran, currently a postdoc researcher at the Osaka City University, has obtained her PhD degree at the Department of Comparative Literature, the University of Hong Kong in 2011. Her research fields include film studies and urban studies. E-mail: maraninhk@gmail.com

Notes

1 The Shanghai Media and Entertainment Group (SMEG) is a multimedia television and radio broadcasting, news, and Internet company. The company employs around 5,200 people, with capital assets of RMB 11.7 billion. Formed in 2001, SMEG is the result of a merger among

the People's Radio Station of Shanghai, East Radio Shanghai, Shanghai Television Station, and Oriental Television Station.

2 This is the largest and most influential state-run film enterprise in China. It is also the only importer of foreign films in China and a major exporter of Chinese films.

3 For example, let us examine the 12th SIFF in 2009, whose catalogue was offered to the press first time in its history. In its OC, there were 3 Chairpersons, including two vice presidents of the SARFT and the vice mayor of Shanghai, although it was difficult to decide which of them would have the final say in the film selection. The OC had 16 vice chairpersons, some of whom were officials from the SARFT. Most of them were from the municipal administrative bureaus and entities in charge of cultural affairs. An even longer list could be found in the section of *Executive Committee Members*, which could be roughly categorized into three groups as follows: 1) officials from a variety of functioning bureaus of the municipal government; 2) CEOs of the SMEG and the Shanghai Film Group; 3) editors-in-chief from mainstream media outlets based in Shanghai, such as *Wenhui Bao*, *Xinmin Evening News*, and *Jiefang Daily*, to name a few. Vice CEO of *Ping'an Bank*, the major sponsor of SIFF, was also an executive committee member. Apart from the fest's headquarter, the SECRETARIAT, the 12th SIFF delegated its personnel into various units with their own central functions, namely, COMPETITION, FILM MARKET, FORUM, SPECIAL EVENT, PRESS and PROMOTION, ADVERTISEMENT & FUNDING (including the REGISTRATION CENTER and POSTULANT or the volunteer section) and SAFETY and SECURITY; together with a mysteriously titled "the 12th INSTITUTION."

4 Personal interview with Chris Berry, November, 2009.

5 Ibid.

6 At the 12th SIFF, for instance, apart from the afore-mentioned competition films for both the Jin Jue and the Asian New Talent Awards, the fest also set up the section of *Panorama Films*, which showcased highly diverse films from all over the world. At the same time, they also have a set entitled *Global Village*, which was categorized and named based on geographical divisions, including segments on Australia, Germany, Switzerland, Turkey, Brazil, and even Upcoming Italian Stars, to name a few. Indeed, such segments echoed SIFF's original understanding of "being international" as consisting of "many countries."

7 For instance at the 12th SIFF,of the the four members of the Asian New Talent Award, Nonzee Nimibutr (the leading figure of Thai New Wave Cinema), and Royston Tan (Singaporean filmmaker) have not had their films screened at SIFF at all, whereas those of Korean maestro Kwon-taek Im and Chinese indie filmmaker Zhu Wen have been screened.

8 The original regulation item in Chinese was accessed on Jan 11th 2010, at http://indus.chinafilm.com/200701/10257.html

9 For instance, at the 2009 SIFF, among the 15 *Jinjue Award Competition* file nominees, there were only three titles from Asia, while all the other entries came from Europe. In addition, numerous non-competition films also came from European countries, such as Norway, Denmark, France and Italy. Judging from the history of the SIFF's *Jinjue Award* (the *Golden Goblet*), its top award for competition films, most recipients of the *Best Feature Film* are those coming from Europe. Exceptions occurred in 1993, when the first SIFF awarded the top prize to a Taiwanese film, *Hill of No Return* (*Wuyan De Shanqiu*, 1992; Dir. Wang Tong), and in 2003, when the top award went to PRC's *Life Show* (*Shenghuoxiu*, 2003; Dir. Huo Jianqi). Meanwhile, with the proliferation of the *Jin Jue* awards, the Best Music and Best Technology awards were added in 1999. The Best Screenplay and Best Cinematography awards were added in 2003, and the Jury Grand Prix was added in 2004. As a result, the SIFF was plagued by accusations from the domestic press, which declared that the SIFF seemed to be "splitting awards" to keep a balance between participating countries and regions. Apart from these key sections, the film festival has also affiliated itself with the *International Student*

Shorts Award in 2008. In fact, this part is considered as the only innovative section of the whole film festival.

10 Despite its market imperatives and the spokeswoman's easy formulation of "many countries" as "*guojihua*," I would wish to emphasize that the cosmopolitan dynamics of the SIFF can also be approached from its repressed cinéphile tradition. According to the journalist of *Film Business Asia*'s Stephen Cremin, the presence of the cinéphile culture in the SIFF has placed it above the newly launched *Beijing International Film Festival* (BJIFF, since 2011). It is not merely speculation that Shanghai's once prominent status as "Hollywood of the East" and many film professionals' close association with the local film industry and its cinematic tradition have made the film festival possible. Shanghai had harbored the idea of hosting a film festival since the mid-1980s, and many senior filmmakers closely associated with Shanghai Film Studio, such as Zhang Junxiang and Xu Chusang as well as Fourth Generation filmmakers Xie Jin and Wu Yigong, were among its most avid promoters. In fact, Wu Yigong, then head of the Film Bureau of Shanghai played a crucial role in convincing the officials from the SARFT that the SIFF must take place. Wu eventually acted as the executive vice president of the inaugural fest. The Shanghai Film Critics Society has established its annual film awards and has recognized Chinese films since 1991.

11 As required in the Film Regulation, the series number of the "Permit for Film Screening" (*Dianyingpian gongying xukezheng*) must be imprinted at the beginning of the film, which is accompanied by an animation clip with a flying dragon.

12 In his festival report for the 2009 SIFF, Chris Berry wrote, "Chinese films that have not been through the government censorship system – and that means all Chinese independent films – cannot be shown at the festival. But the filmmakers can be there. For example, Liu Jiayin's *Oxhide II* had just been honoured with a place in the Director's Fortnight at Cannes this year. There is nothing politically or sexually controversial about the film. So, you might expect to see it at Shanghai. But *Oxhide II* is a Chinese indie unsubmitted for censorship and therefore excluded from the festival." For more details, you may refer to "Bigger than Ever: the 12th Shanghai International Film Festival", Senses of Cinema, Issue 52 (http://www.sensesofcinema.com/bigger-than-ever-the-12th-shanghai-international-film-festival/). It is apparent that the censorship procedure and the political intricacies still loom as the major barriers preventing the SIFF from integrating with the Chinese independent filmmaking scene. Henceforth, I suggest that the presence of a limited number of legitimated Chinese indie works, together with domestic productions with neither possibilities to be distributed/exhibited at domestic cinemas or film festival overseas, will continue to feature in the SIFF's programming.

13 See the detailed introduction of the Shanghai Film Studio at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai_Film_Studio.

14 This pertains to the darkest chapter in China's cinematic history, in which the State systematically erased the city's cinematic tradition, with many of the film professionals persecuted and tortured to death.

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Production, Creative Firms and Urban Space in Shanghai

By Sheng Zhong

Abstract

This paper examines the firms in Shanghai's official "Creative Industry Clusters (CICs)". It aims to contribute to the creative city debate by unveiling the relationships between the production of new economy firms and the reconstruction of urban space in the Chinese context. Based on questionnaire surveys conducted in 2009, the paper finds that Shanghai's creative firms are new, small and flexible and this image conforms to the prototypical "creative firms" described in widely cited Western literature. The paper argues that Shanghai's CICs represent a market-oriented, fluid, and risk-taking production culture that is a break from the city's socialist past. However, Shanghai's new economy spaces in the making are faced with many constraints and contradictions. On the one hand, although market and neoliberalized urban spaces are providing critical resources for firms to grow at a time of state retreat, they also imposes risks, such as career instability, confusion for creative talents and cost pressure for new firms. On the other hand, the state's ideological control reinforces the market's homogenizing effect on cultural production. Therefore, Shanghai's trajectory toward greater innovation and creativity are far from guaranteed despite fast proliferation of creative clusters in the city in the past decade.

Keywords: Shanghai, creative industries, new economy spaces, inner city, market, the state

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Production, Creative Firms and New Urban Spaces in Shanghai

In the early 20th century, Shanghai was known as China's most important industrial and financial center. It was also a glamorous global metropolis with a thriving consumer culture (Cochran 1999). The communist takeover of the country in 1949 fundamentally transformed the city into a socialist production base when finance, consumerism and markets, which were ideologically tied to capitalist decadence, were rejected with great contempt. In the art world, professional artists were bureaucratized to serve the propaganda needs of the Party while the popular commercial culture of cities was destroyed. Art consumption was homogenized and "once obvious distinctions among elite, popular, and folk culture became blurred as officials treated all art forms as administratively equivalent" (Kraus 2004: 37).

When market forces were allowed to reign again in the reform period, Shanghai saw a revival of finance and commerce but at the same time experienced a wrenching decline of its traditional manufacturing sector that was built at the peak of state socialism. In the 1990s, more than 1,000 industrial firms, mostly located in the cramped inner city, were either closed down or relocated to the suburbs (SEC and SCPHRO 2002: 96). Amidst this decline, a number of freelance artists and cultural professionals, who wanted to stay away from the state control or seek alternative means of financing from the burgeoning market, helped revalorize the old industrial spaces in Shanghai. Initial sporadic actions were later followed by concerted and deliberate efforts in the "making" of such new economy spaces[1]. The most notable of these are over 80 so-called Creative Industry Clusters (CICs) accredited by the Municipal Government[2], who view CICs as a solution to the woes of bankrupt state companies and a means to invigorate derelict inner city industrial spaces.

The revalorization of urban spaces by employing cultural and creative narratives is not unique to Shanghai. Similar cases have been well documented around the world by Zukin (1982, 1995), Hamnett (2003), Ley, (1996), Hutton (2004, 2008), Indergaard (2004), Lloyd (2006), and Fujita and Hill (1993), although the trajectory of each city is subject to its historic path and local contingencies (Barns & Hutton 2009). As an emergent urban phenomenon, cultural districts and creative clusters in China have caught the attention of many researchers (see Keane 2007; Currier 2008; Zhong 2009a, 2009b; Wang 2009). A critical review suggests that most of this research has focused on the institutional players involved in space provision (such as the local state, developers, the restructuring state-owned enterprises) while very little is said about the space users. This research gap is particularly problematic as creative clusters, which emerged as the production site for fine arts in the first place, are increasingly attuned toward creative industries, a heterogeneous collection of productive activities. Although research on Shanghai's CICs in the Chinese language (see Xiang 2005; Zhang 2006; He 2006; Yu 2007) somehow touch on space users, most of the discussions have been provided

from the abstract level, and have failed to produce sufficient empirical details on tenant firms, for example, who they are, what they do, how they conduct businesses and so on. In fact, theories of industrial agglomeration have been mistaken by several researchers for actual empirical reality.

To address this research gap, the paper presents a profile of creative firms in Shanghai's CICs based on questionnaire surveys and interviews. The paper hopes to illustrate how creative firms, a big collective player in Shanghai's latest inner city transformations, are shaping Shanghai's "city-ness" within a new socioeconomic context. It is argued that the creative industry firms represent a break from Shanghai's state-dominated industrial past. However, Shanghai's trajectory toward greater innovation and creativity[3] are not guaranteed as several contradictions within its creative industries remain. The paper comprises of five substantive parts. The first section discusses the meaning of "creative industries" in the Shanghai context. The second part situates this research within a scholarly debate on cultural/creative clusters. The third section presents empirical data on creative firms in Shanghai and the fourth section provides a discussion on the relationships between creative firms and new urban spaces as well as their dilemmas. The last section concludes the paper.

Defining Creative Industries in Shanghai

The term "culture industry", a closely related term to "creative industry", was first used by Adorno and Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School in a critical tone to suggest mass culture's affinity to industry rather than to culture, which had historically been separated from commerce (Adorno 1990; Garnham 2005). Later, French sociologists (e.g., Miége 1987) used the plural form, "cultural industries", to indicate the diversity and complexity in the sector (Hesmondhalgh 2002). Unlike the term "cultural industries", which is a conceptual construct, Pratt (2005) thinks that "creative industries" is a political term which was employed by the British New Labour Government since 1997 to distance themselves from the Old Labour. However, some researchers use the two terms interchangeably (e.g., Hall 2000; Drake 2003) while others make differentiations. For example, Garnham (2005) suggests that creative industries also incorporate information technology industries, which are not generally included in cultural industries. Meanwhile, Hesmondhalgh (2002) adds craft-based industries to creative industries, but not to cultural industries. In the Chinese policy discourses, "culture industries" emerged out of the old cultural sector in which market forces had been restrained while "creative industries" fall within the new domain of economic development and are less amenable to ideological controls.

The most widely circulated definition of "creative industries" was given by the British Department of Culture, Media, and Sports (DCMS) as "those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill, and talent, and which have a

potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property." Key sectors include content, design, heritage and tourism, and performing arts (Hall 2000; Jeffcutt and Pratt 2002; UK Creative Industries Task Force website).[4] While this definition stresses both the inputs (creativity, skills, and talents) and outputs (intellectual property) of the industries, it does not adequately conceptualize the exact products at hand.

In this paper, it is more important to examine the meaning of "creative industries" within the local context. Originated in the West and travelling worldwide, the concept has been repeatedly rephrased and reinterpreted. Kong *et al.* (2006) suggest that creative industry discourses in Asia exhibit substantial local variations. In a vast country like China, the localization of creative narrative is a natural outcome. The official wording and meaning chosen by individual cities is not only dependent on interpretations by multi-disciplinary academics who participate in policy making, but also on local power struggles, development contingencies as well as collective learning experiences. In the national power center of Beijing, the fear of losing control of ideologically-charged cultural production combined with an imperative for economic development has resulted in the use of the term "cultural and creative industries" (*wenhua chuangyi chanye*) in the policy documents while in the more open and modernization-conscious Shanghai, the term "creative industries" was directly translated into Chinese as *changyi chanye* and circulated in public policy statements from the very start (Hui 2006; Keane 2007).

In Shanghai, creative industry ideas and policies were influenced by both global creative discourse and indigenous creative industry development (see Keane 2007; Zhong 2009a). When the Municipal Government realized that the sector's enormous wealth-generating potential was accompanied by only a minimum chance of regime instability,[5] it started to promote the sector with great enthusiasm. To facilitate public policy making, around 2005, Shanghai Economic Commission and Shanghai Statistical Bureau officially designated the following five sectors as creative industries: (1) research, development, and design; (2) architectural and related design; (3) cultural activities, creation, and media; (4) consultancy and planning, and (5) fashion, leisure, and lifestyle services. The five sectors have been further subdivided into 38 categories and 55 segments (Shanghai Creative Industry Center, 2006). The official endorsement and designation of creative industry sectors provided guidance to Shanghai's CIC managers who wanted to attract new economy firms to their sites.

Production, Agglomeration and Urban Space

In post-industrial societies, cultural and creative firms are often characterized as small, specialized, flexible and dependent on spatial proximity even when transportation and communication costs have been substantially reduced (Scott 2000, 2006b). The demand for creative goods is quite unpredictable as they are valued

for their symbolic features (Garnham 1987, 2005; Hesmondhalgh 1996; Caves 2000). Flexible specialization and spatial agglomeration can help firms reduce production risks in many ways. First, with geographical proximity to other transaction-related firms, creative firms are able to respond to the changing circumstances swiftly without overstretching their resources (Scott 2006b). The fact that the whole production process cannot do away with material support even if final products are immaterial means that the transaction-cost thesis always remains relevant to creative industries (Pratt 2000). Second, spatial proximity also provide firms with advantages of "untraded dependencies" (Storper 1995, 2000), such as talent pools, public institutions, rules, customs, conventions, common language, values and so on. These non-transaction-based dependencies are particularly important for creative firms because tightly-knit clusters help firms build synergies and trust, ease the transfer of tacit knowledge and encourage collective learning, all of which are keys to modern innovation (Feldmen 1994; Pratt 2000). Researchers have conceptualized the aggregation of such creativity-enhancing local factors as "innovative milieu" (Camagni 1991), "buzz" (Storper & Venables 2004) or "creative field" (Scott 2006b).

The benefits of production networks suggest that creative firms tend to locate in places where other creative firms concentrate. In addition to this "relational" perspective, scholars have also pinpointed locational features that serve as magnets to creative talents. For example, some marginal spaces are attractive to creative workers because of their affordability, functionality and uniqueness (Zukin 1982). Spaces may also have high symbolic values for creative workers. Drake (2003) argues that "places" can be viewed as subjective, imagined and emotional phenomena in addition to their objective and physical beings. Raw location attributes (history, architectural styles, natural environment, everyday life etc.) which affect the subjective emotions of creative workers can serve as stimuli, prompts, ideas or "raw materials" in individualized aesthetic or cultural creation. Recent studies on location features and creativity also show that creative firms follow creative talents to where physical and social amenities abound and where social milieu is open, diverse and tolerant to differences (Clark *et al*. 2002; Florida 2005). Influenced by such ideas, attracting the so-called "creative class" (Florida 2005) has increasingly become incorporated into the policy discourses of local governments around the world. Although the creative-class thesis has been criticized by scholars as mechanistic, neglecting social justice and methodologically problematic (Peck 2005; Scott 2006a; Pratt 2008), there is less controversy that an open and tolerant urban culture is welcomed by creative talents as well as common citizens in their own right.

Economic production, space and urban culture are always entwined with one another. Economic production is one of the main functions of cities and production[6] agglomerations constitute part of the urban socioeconomic fabric. The "relational" perspective of agglomeration theories stresses the place-based communi-

ties as "not just the foci of cultural labor in the narrow sense, but also active hubs of social reproduction in which social cultural competencies are maintained and circulated" (Scott 2000: 33). The casual, tolerant and non-hierarchical culture of Silicon Valley, which distinguishes it from Fordist manufacturing agglomerations and state dominated research centers, has been shaped by the large number of interlinked hi-tech start-ups who value flexibility, openness and a risk-taking attitude (Saxenian 1994). On the other hand, the "locational feature" perspective of agglomeration theories stresses local characters (such as space, everyday life, social norms and so on) that are independent of production networks but can nevertheless influence or be drawn into the productive process. Through the creative synthesis of cultural workers, these unique locational details may get embodied in the final product. It is not uncommon that cultural or creative products bear the feel or "odour" of the local cultural tradition (Iwabuchi 1998). In many cases, the mental associations between cities and local products can become so strong that cities and products define each other. Paris is a synonym for fashion design while Hollywood a substitute for film production. Here city names, as a highly desirable brand for local producers, are transformed into valuable cultural and symbolic capital of the localities (Scott 2000; Molotch 2002; Mommaas 2004).

Understanding Creative Industry Firms in Shanghai

John Friedmann (2007) argues that urban space becomes meaningful only after being lived in. This section provides an overview of firms that inhabit Shanghai's creative spaces. Questionnaire surveys of creative firms were conducted at four CICs in Shanghai from February 16 to 27, 2009, including M50, Red Town, Tianzifang and Creative Factory.[7] In addition, information gathered in14 in-depth interviews with workers in the creative industries provide complementary information as well as a cross-check on survey data. As this paper is primarily concerned with creative firms in general, questionnaire surveys are the primary source of information.

Before presenting any data, it is necessary to provide a sketch of each survey site. M50 is located on the bank of Suzhou Creek and was originally occupied by a state-owned textile factory. After the company was shut down at the turn of the millennium, some freelance artists who had been displaced by upscale condominium projects moved there to take advantage of its cheap rents and functional spaces. The site had been under serious threats of demolition for several years. Nevertheless, it was finally kept intact after urban conservation crusaders used both their voices and networks to boycott redevelopment pressure. In 2005 it won government recognition as a prominent art district.[8]

Red Town, which is located along one of the city's commercial thoroughfare and connected by a subway line, enjoys unmatched locational advantage. It was once occupied by a state-owned steel factory that also went out of business. In

2005, the site was chosen by the Municipal Government to host the city's flagship cultural project--Shanghai Sculpture Space (SSS). The project, which was based on architectural rehabilitation, was implemented under a public-private partnership arrangement and the chosen developer was allowed to develop a substantial quantity of commercial space to subsidize the SSS and other public cultural activities held on the site (Wang 2009).

Tianzifang is located in Taikang Road, a prime area in the middle of the old French Concession where traditional *lilong* houses mingle with small-scale street factories that can be traced back to the 1930s.[9] When the factory spaces had fallen into disuse by the late 1990s,[10] a few well-known artists arrived at the site, including the late Chen Yifei, whose oil paintings command one of the highest prices among contemporary Chinese painters. Soon, a number of art shops, galleries, some less well-known artists, and a few foreign art studios followed the "masters" to the site. In the next a few years, due to space constraints in the old factories, some *lilong* houses were also converted into commercial spaces. Meanwhile, commercial activities burgeoned, replacing some early arrivals who could not sell enough of their work to afford the escalating rents.

Creative Factory has a large number of construction-related design firms. It is located in the vicinity of Tongji University, which has one of the best architecture, urban planning, and civil engineering programs in China. The Research Institute for Ocean Fishing Machinery used to occupy the Creative Factory site and is still the *de facto* owner of the land. In the 1990s, the Institute moved to suburban Songjiang and began leasing the vacated office spaces to the burgeoning construction-related design firms in the area, most of which were in one way or another connected to Tongji University. Creative Factory can be considered a pure production site, as commercial activities are largely absent. In the following, I will summarize information on the creative firms at the four sites in terms of business profiles, location decisions and cluster features.

Business Profiles

Firms at the four sites consisted of relatively new establishments. Among the 104 firms that provided information on the year of establishment, 86.5% were less than 10 years old, 56.7% less than five years old, and 25% less than three years. One can infer that the birth of new creative firms came hand-in-hand with the formation of CICs in Shanghai. In general, all four sites were dominated by small firms, as the median size of all firms was 7.2 formal employees. Firms at M50 and Tianzifang were even smaller, with median size stood at only 3.5 formal employees for both (Table 1). Among the firms that provided relevant information, 70.1% (N=118) did not have subsidiary or other branches at the time of the survey, and 16% had only one subsidiary or other branch. On the other hand, 77.2% (N=120) were not a subsidiary or a branch of another company. These data suggest the independence of creative firms at the four sites.

Cluster Name	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Grouped Median
Creative Factory	27.3	33	31.0	4.0	150.0	16.4
M50	8.3	29	14.9	2.0	75.0	3.5
Red Town	39.8	22	61.2	2.0	200.0	15.0
Tianzifang	5.2	32	5.1	2.0	25.0	3.5
Total	18.8	116	34.6	2.0	200.0	7.2

Table 1: Number of Formal Employees in the Firms

It is important to understand the production that firms were engaged in. The questionnaire contains a number of questions in this regard. The firms were asked to evaluate the descriptions of the products/production in terms of applicability to their company.[11] Table 2 indicates that the first four descriptions more accurately reflected the production of firms surveyed than the rest. The last two descriptions were the least accurate, although over half of the firms still agreed with these descriptions. In particular, firms in the four sites tended to produce high-quality, unique, and custom-made products. In comparison, price competitiveness was less important and standardization of products was less prevalent.

Product/Production Description as Described on Questionnaire	% of Firms Agreed or Strongly Agreed
K) We compete by providing high-quality products.	89.2%
E) We provide custom-made, individualized or one-off products.	83.5%
H) Our work involves a lot of artistic work.	82.8%
L) We compete by providing unique products.	80.9%
F) Our work is comprised of different projects.	71.6%
I) Our work is knowledge-intensive.	67.7%
A) We provide totally different products from our competitors.	66.3%
B) We need constantly try new methods in our production.	65.2%
G) Our production is reliant on inputs from our clients/ customers.	63.7%
D) Our products are produced in small batches.	63.0%
C) We produce according to pre-set product standards.	58.9%
J) We compete by providing cheaper products.	56.0%

Table 2: Products and Production of Firms (N=95)

Firms in the surveys were also asked about the value of their products and were allowed to choose more than one answer. Among the 118 firms that provided answers to this question, only 13 firms (11%) answered that their products offered only utilitarian value to users. Most firms provided products with certain symbolic values (such as aesthetic, artistic, cultural, recreational value, and so on) or a combination of utilitarian and symbolic values. Figure 1 summarizes the percentage number of firms that provided products of certain values. Clearly, a very high proportion of firms (79.7%) offered products with aesthetic or artistic value. Utilitarian value and cultural value had the next two highest proportions at 56.8% and 50.8%, respectively. Therefore, although firms generally did not provide products only for their utilitarian value, the "usefulness" of the products remained an important feature of the firms' products. This utilitarian feature also means that most products are not items of political sensitivity.

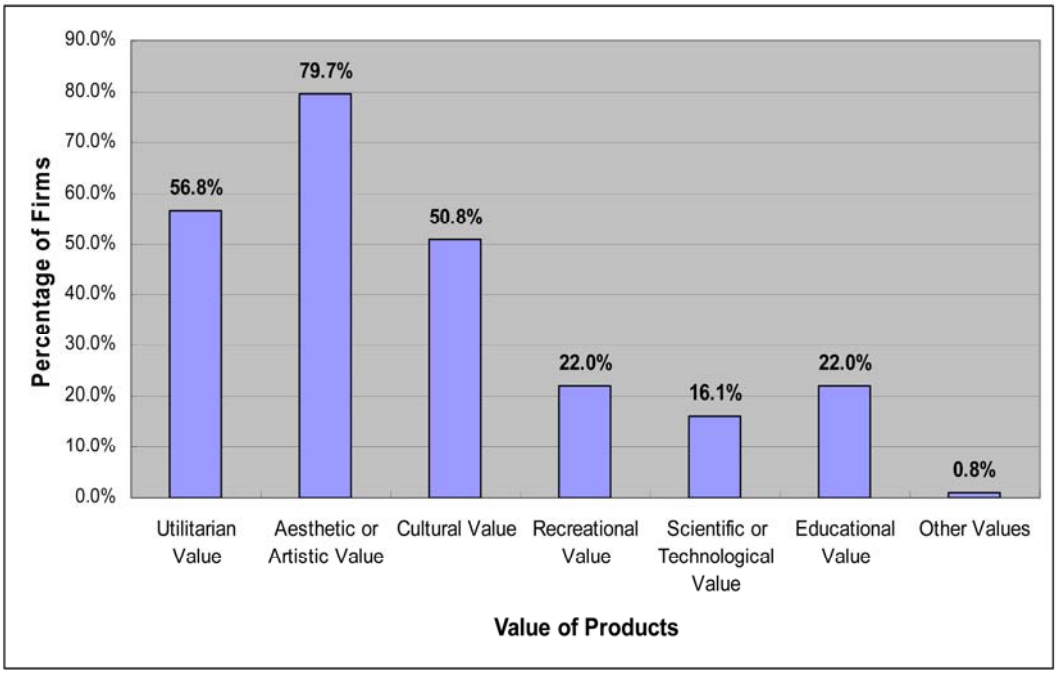

Figure 1: Value of Products offered by Firms (N=118)

Note: Figures in the graph represent the percentage number of firms that offered products of a certain type of value.

Location Decisions

One of the most important issues addressed in the survey is the location choice of firms. Companies at the four clusters were asked why they chose to locate in Shanghai rather than other cities. A number of location factors were listed on the questionnaire and firms were asked to rate these factors in terms of their relative importance. Figure 2 illustrates the relative importance of different factors for their decision to locate in Shanghai.

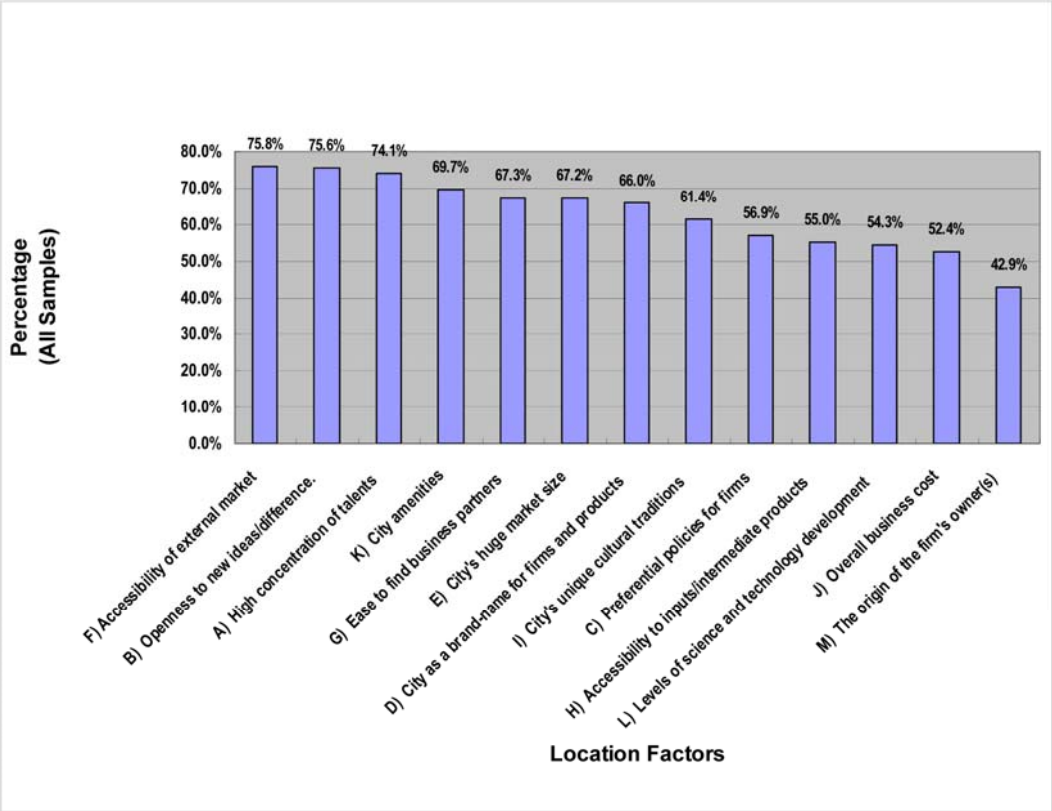

Figure 2: Why Locate in Shanghai?

Note: Figures in the graph represent percentage of firms that considered a certain location factor as "very important" or "important".

Referring to Figure 2, all but one location factor were deemed important or very important by more than half the firms. In comparative terms, however, Factor **F** [accessibility to external (domestic or international) markets], stood out as Shanghai's top location advantage (with 75.8% firms regarding it as either important or very important). It is also interesting to discover that, although Shanghai is the largest city in China, Factor **E** (its local market size) was not considered as important as Factor **F**. This implies that Shanghai today still maintains its historic role as a link or gateway to other parts of China, as well as to the world.

Factors **B** (the city's openness to new ideas and differences) and **A** [high concentration of talents (artistic, technological, and managerial)] were also considered as important or very important by approximately three-quarters of the firms. According to Florida (2005), these two factors ("tolerance" and "talents") are directly related to the creativity of cities. Factor **T** (technology) as argued by Florida, was not ranked so high (as Factor **L,** for example) perhaps because the sample included many small art studios and galleries that were not very dependent technological sophistication of the city. In Figure 2, Factor **K** (amenities) appears as fourth and this is one of Florida's highly valued assets, as he thinks that amenity attracts footloose creative talents to certain cities. In addition, factors such as **G** (ease of finding business partners), **E** (i.e., huge market size), and **D** (city as a

brand-name for firms and products), though not as important as the four factors previously mentioned, were considered as very important or important by approximately two-thirds of the firms.

Another interesting issue revealed in the data is that overall business costs, which are usually considered one of the major concerns of business management, were not very highly regarded compared to most factors listed. Factor **C** (preferential policies for firm), related to business cost cutting, was also not ranked very high. The firms in the sample considered value-creation, which depends on creativity, far more important than single-minded cost-cutting by the firms. Such a result conforms to the discussion of Scott (2000) on creative firms in advanced economies that generally have higher business costs than those in developing countries, but nevertheless excel and win through innovation, creativity, and product differentiation. Therefore, creative firms may have chosen to stay in Shanghai not to reduce business costs (indeed business costs were higher in Shanghai than most other cities in China); but rather, to seek the creative impulses the city provided.

On the other hand, firms were also asked why they had chosen the specific cluster where they had leased space as opposed to other locations in Shanghai. Figure 3 shows the relative importance of different factors for a firm's decision to locate in their respective cluster.

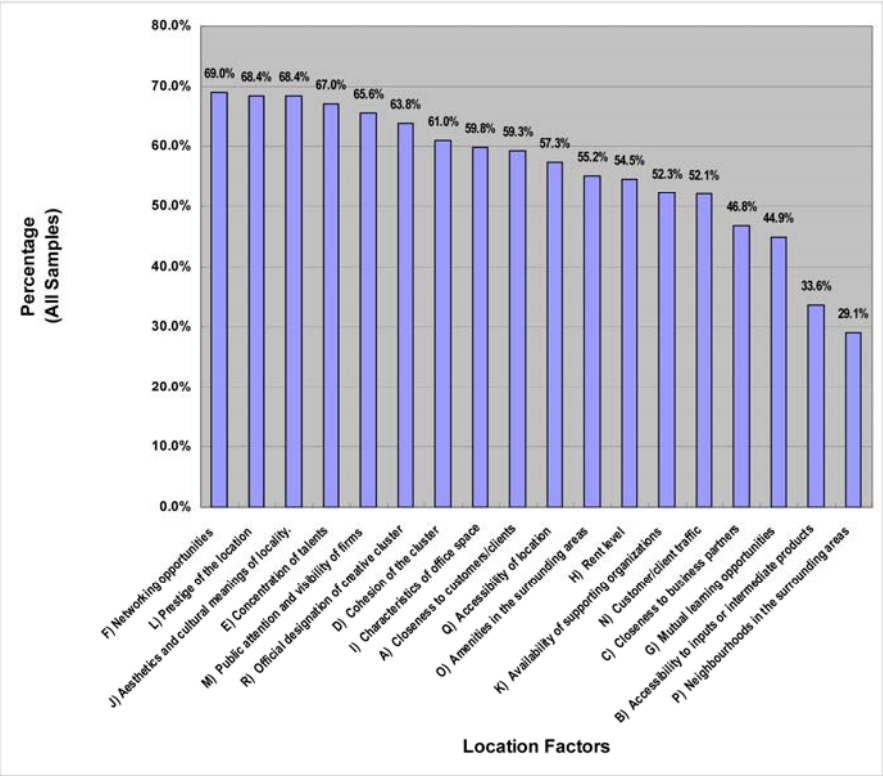

Figure 3: Why Locate in that Cluster

Note: Figures in the graph represent percentage of firms that considered a certain location factor as "very important" or "important".

The listed location factors can be divided into two types: location attributes and cluster dynamics (Drake 2003). Cluster dynamics can be further divided into "traded interdependencies" and "untraded interdependencies" (Storper 1995). Referring to Figure 3, among the top seven factors that over 60% of the firms considered very important or important, four factors can be categorized as major location attributes, including **L** (prestige of the location), **J** (aesthetics and cultural meanings of locality), **M** (public attention and visibility of firms), and **R** (official designation of creative industry cluster). Among top factors, three can be categorized as "untraded interdependencies," including **F (**networking opportunities), **E (**concentration of talents), and **D (**cohesion of the cluster).

In comparison, factors that can be categorized as "traded interdependencies" and are directly related to business costs were not ranked very high. These factors include **B (**accessibility to inputs or intermediate products), **C (**closeness to business partners), and **A (**closeness to customers/clients). In addition, Factor **H (**rental level), which had been one of the most important considerations for earlier occupants of Shanghai CICs (see Zhong 2009a), had lost its relative importance. The ranking of different location factors demonstrates that, in relative terms, direct business cost-cutting factors were less important than factors that had greater direct impact on creativity, such as location attributes or specific factors related to cluster dynamics. This does not, however, suggest that cost-cutting factors have become irrelevant. Over half of the firms regarded rental level as an important or very important factor in selecting business locations in the city.

Cluster Features

Talents are a major competitive edge for today's creative industry firms. With the *hukou* policy[12] still in effect, human resources is a far less mobile factor of production than capital in today's China. In the survey, the firms were asked to estimate the proportion of their employees from different geographic areas, including: Shanghai, China (excluding Shanghai) and overseas. Incorporating answers about the total number of formal employees, the percentage number of employees from different geographic areas can be calculated for each cluster. The results are presented in Table 3.

Cluster Name	from Shanghai %	from China (not SH) %	from Overseas %	Total %	N
Creative Factory	47.8	51.8	0.4	100	31
M50	40.7	57.0	2.3	100	22
Red Town	43.3	51.5	5.2	100	18
Tianzifang	40.9	43.3	15.8	100	23
All Samples	45.0	51.7	3.3	100	94

Table 3: Average Percentage of Employees from Certain Geographic Areas

It needs to be noted that it is difficult to define whether a person is from Shanghai. Some people came to Shanghai to attend university from another part of China, but found a job in the city after graduation and remained there (usually obtaining a local *hukou* in the process). Some people may regard these people as coming from Shanghai, but others may regard them as immigrants from other part of China. To standardize the answers, I define people from Shanghai as having a Shanghai *hukou*. However, this tends to overestimate the number of people or talented employees who were Shanghai citizens from the start (i.e., those raised in Shanghai before attending tertiary educational institutions) and underestimate those from elsewhere in China. Referring to Table 3, the majority of employees (55%) in the firms that had provided answers came from outside of Shanghai. Given the potential bias of the data just mentioned, the real proportion of "outside talents" could be even higher. This means that creative industries in Shanghai were very reliant on human resource from elsewhere, despite restrictions on *hukou*. In other words, creative industries in Shanghai served as a pull to talents from across the country, even from overseas. Although employees from overseas did not comprise a large proportion of the total (only 3.3% for all samples), they were present in all four clusters surveyed. And the proportion of firms that employed foreigners in four clusters ranged from 6.5% in Creative Factory to 37.5% in Tianzifang.

Firms were also asked about their methods of recruitment. Among the 96 firms that answered this question, 57.3% used "ads in the public media." Also notable is that over half of firms (51%) recruited employees through informal means, such as personal networks. This demonstrates that new economy firms do use traditional methods in running their businesses. In addition, approximately one-third of the firms had potential employees first knocking on their doors and sending in their resumes (another informal way of recruitment), instead of these firms needing to formally post job vacancy ads to attract applicants. So many firms had access to a ready pool of talent even before recruitment needs arose. Job-hopping is a common phenomenon among employees of creative firms (Saxenian 1994). This was also the case for the firms surveyed. They were asked to estimate the percentage of firms in their respective business area that frequently faced job-hopping problems. The average figures for the four clusters were 46.20% (N=92).

To evaluate the institutional thickness of the four clusters, the survey asked firms to choose the types of organizations that they thought could benefit them (but might not be accessible) and the types of organizations that they had access to. The listed organizations included educational or training organization, business associations, regulatory bodies, promotional organizations, R&D institutions, professional organizations, workers' associations and other types. It was found that firms in general did not think very highly of the role of supporting institutions, with the highest regard given to educational and training institutions (though only 32.4% of firms thought it important). The low appeal of supporting institutions differs from popular opinion in the literature. On the other hand, the percentage of

firms that judged certain institutions as important was consistently higher than the percentage of those that actually had access to such an institution. This indicated the gap between what was useful and what was available. The gap was wider for those institutions that could provide less visible and long-term support (such as educational and training organizations, and R&D institutions) than those that had more conspicuous and short-term impacts (such as business associations, regulatory bodies, or promotional organizations that tended to have direct effect on firms' financial/economic performance). The lack of "institutional thickness" in Shanghai's CICs is suggestive of the immaturity of Shanghai's creative clusters. Formed within the past ten years, CICs are still production agglomerations in the making.

Rents constituted a big cost component for creative firms. Rents in a cluster usually varied depending on many factors, such as the location, levels in a building, building quality, types of uses—commercial or office, art studios or design firms, among others. The surveys revealed that the rental levels ranged between 1.5 RMB/m^2/day and 10 RMB/m^2/day in the four clusters. Taking into consideration the rental level for offices in Shanghai at the time,[13] the lower end was quite reasonable. However, most firms at the four clusters were start-ups with very limited financial resources. Rent was therefore a heavy burden for them. Among the possible planning interventions that the questionnaire listed (such as checking rental increase, enhance accessibility, marketing the cluster, etc.), preventing rental increase stood out as the most widely supported measure, with 92.4% of the firms regarding it as "very important" or "important."

A Brief Summary

The surveys helped unveil the faces of Shanghai's creative firms. On general, they were new and small, offering products with significant creative components. Although the official categorization of creative industry in Shanghai may be quite arbitrary and lacks theoretical justifications, in terms of the current state of affairs, a substantial number of firms at these four clusters did conform to the prototypical "creative firms" described in widely cited Western literature (e.g., Scott 2000, 2005). Location constituted an important business decisions for these firms and in making locational choices, they were generally more concerned with value creation than with cost reduction, although the latter remained important. In addition, firms derived great benefit from physical contact with other productive entities and were quite dependent on talents that the city attracted from the outside. However, the data do not suggest significant institutional thickness of the clusters and production networks are yet to mature in the coming years. Adding to that challenge is the increasing pressure of commercialization and rent escalation, which leaves a great deal of uncertainty over the future of Shanghai's creative startups.

Creative Firms and Shanghai's Spatial Transformation

During the past several years, creative industries in Shanghai have registered phenomenal growth. Aggregate GDP for creative industries shoot up from RMB49.3 billion in 2004 to RMB114.8 billion in 2009, translating into an annual increase of 18.4%, far exceeding the pace of growth for the whole economy. As a result, the proportion of creative industry sectors in the whole economy increased from 5.8% to 7.7% during the period. By 2010, Shanghai's 81 CICs hosted over 4,000 businesses and more than 80,000 employees.[14]

Firms at Shanghai's CICs today represent a break from city's socialist past. In the socialist period, the spaces at all four sites were ultimately serving manufacturing production, the pillar of the national economy. With the central planners dictating every detail of production, including what to produce, when to produce, how to produce and where to produce, the industrial firms, organized in cellular work-unit (*danwei*) systems, were reduced to an appendage to the state. Physical labor enjoyed moral superiority over intellectual work and quantity of industrial products, rather than quality and sophistication of products defined the socialist term of modernity. Under the "big rice pot" system (*daguofan*, the excessively egalitarian remuneration system), workers strived to be average rather than exceptional or innovative on the shop-floors. Serving as agents of the state, employees were also rewarded with "iron rice bowls" (*tiefanwan*), the guaranteed lifelong employment supplemented by work-unit administered welfares. Although China's open-door policy was launched in the late 1970s, Shanghai's work-unit socialism (Womack 1991) has persisted long into the 1990s as the city's strategic position in the national economy prevented it from becoming China's frontline of reform and marketization. It was not until the late 1990s that industrial restructuring swept Shanghai and the old socioeconomic contract between the state and industrial employees began to disintegrate. In the subsequent years, the city's economy became diversified, although due to its heavy socialist legacy, state still exerted quite a strong influence on the economy.[15]

Shanghai's CICs can be read as an articulation of city's structural changes in the past two decades. State-owned or collectively-owned companies have been replaced by foreign companies, joint ventures or private enterprises, whose primary concern is profit, rather than state building. And new types of economic activities focusing on generating knowledge, ideas and meanings are not only encouraged and promoted by the pro-growth local governments, but also are handsomely rewarded by the new market institutions. While the state cannot dictate production any longer, it also assumes no responsibilities for business failures. Creative firms must cater to or lead the market demand by exploiting their creative capital. To survive and then thrive, they must draw everything that is available to them in their environment. CICs are a type of support system for Shanghai's creative firms. Whether it is locational attributes (e.g., low rent, functional space, industrial heritage, etc.) or cluster social networks, these factors help build and strengthen the

muscles of Shanghai's new economy firms at a time of state retreat. However, the contradiction is that CICs are by and large sites for market competition and therefore, they offer no guarantee to firms' success. If enterprises are not able to make profit fast enough to keep pace with the escalating business cost, say rents, they have no choice but to be shut down.

Human resources are the most important factor of production for creative industries. Today, the old manufacturing workers are nowhere to be found at Shanghai's inner city production sites. The surveys demonstrate that today's space users are fundamentally different from their proletarian predecessors. While old manufacturing workers followed instructions of their superiors, creative professionals today, working in flatter organizations, enjoy considerable work autonomy. Also different from their predecessors who usually remained loyal to only one organization, creative workers today are quite restive and mobile. Not only talents from all over China and even overseas are flowing into Shanghai with increasing ease but also those with exceptional skills can use their great bargaining power to get the best deal for their special aptitude. However, this increased mobility also comes with greater risks of job instability, particularly for those not at the top. As creative industries are notorious for their winner-takes-all property (Frank and Cook 1996), the development of creative industries clearly has ominous implications for China's alarmingly large social inequalities.[16]

Firm and people mobility are intricately linked to urban place-making. Unlike old state firms that could not make independent spatial choices, creative firms today are able to exhibit their location preferences. The formation of new economy spaces and the revitalization of Shanghai's old industrial sites are attributable to this newly gained locational freedom by private enterprises. As active agents, firms and creative talents on the one hand draw nutrients from their environment by dexterously weaving spatial elements into their production processes; and on the other hand, they also help reconstruct urban space by undertaking physical renovations and forming new socioeconomic relations. However, the freedom, or in other words, the footloose nature of independent firms also means a risk for Shanghai's creative clusters. If conditions turn unfavorable, whether it is high rents or loss of appeal because of space homogeneity, firms can exit the site just as fast as they agglomerate. Mobility is both a boon and bane for Shanghai's CICs and Shanghai's creative industries (firms might exit the city as well).

As in other creative centers of the world, Shanghai's creative startups are facing increasing rental pressures. If spaces at CICs are still considered affordable in a comparative sense, we can expect more strains on firms that are located outside of the so-called "creative industry incubators". It is true that new economy firms can mitigate the impact by better tapping their creative potential, but excessive concern over business costs may push firms to choose "safe" products instead of trying innovative ones that may or may not turn out to be marketable. And high rents also disproportionately penalize smaller firms or freelancers as rents constitute

their primary business costs. What makes Shanghai's situation grimmer is that rents may reach unaffordable levels before the city can accumulate enough creative capital to join the world's "creative city" club, the city's economic and cultural ambition. Now, Shanghai is still a far cry from global creativity centers such as New York, Paris or Tokyo. Even within China, Shanghai is nowhere close to challenge Beijing's position as the country's creative and cultural capital. Shanghai not only lags far behind in terms of densities of cultural institutions but also the size of creative communities such as fine artists (Kong 2007). The immaturity of Shanghai's creative industries and creative clusters means that firms are in great need of nurturing and protection from highly commercialized space bidders. This situation is different from the one that is faced by New York or Paris, both of which already possess a critical mass of creative capital as well as a worldwide reputation. Higher rents in these cities serve more as a filter for highly successful firms than as an obstacle for creative firms to proliferate, although the latter is true too some extent.

Although creative industries have introduced new norms into China's largest socialist bastion, adding to the diversity of Shanghai's production ecology, in recent years, neoliberalism has unfortunately become a homogenizing force in the city. Inundated with commercialization fervor[17] and material fetishism, the city seems to be seeking an urban modernity defined solely by economic success and profit generation. The logic that underpins the development trajectory of Shanghai CICs is a telling example (Zhong 2010). Development boosters may argue that Shanghai cannot be over-commercialized as commercial culture was one of the city's traditions. Indeed, "*haipai*" culture, which literally means Shanghai style or Shanghai school and which thrived in the concessionary period, was commercially oriented (Cochran 1999). At that time, commercial culture represented a cultural innovation in Chinese cities. By challenging conservatism, traditions and officialdom represented by *jingpai* (Bejing style/school) culture, the commercial component of "*haipai*" was perceived as vibrant, liberal and modern (Lu 1999). When commercial culture resurfaced in the post-reform period, it again provided an alternative to political art that dominated much of the Socialist era. But the context is different today. When profit-seeking has become the dominant ideology, commercial culture no more possesses the kind of "edginess" that it did in history. "Creativity" implies nonconformity to conventions or distance from the mainstream society. The fact that capitalist creative industries in the advanced economies always need to seek creative energy from marginal or liminal spaces of cities (such as Neo-Bohemian communities) underpins this logic (Frank 1997; Lloyd 2006). Whenever something is established as the mainstream, the aura of cultural coolness around it is gone.

The great dilemma facing Chinese cities is that alternative cultures or values, on which creative industries depend for nutrients, are deprived of living space. *Haipai* culture thrived in Shanghai's concessionary period when different social val-

ues and political dissidents were allowed to co-exist with the orthodox mainstream (Gamble 2003). An illustrative example is the birth of the Communist Party of China in 1921 in the French Concession, in which bourgeois culture burgeoned. However, cultural pluralism is far from the reality today. Censorship on cultural production and consumption, although attenuated in the reform period, has never fallen out of sight (Kraus 2004). And in recent years, China's cultural institutional reforms, which resulted in the formation of many colossal state-owned or state-linked cultural conglomerates, are putting a straightjacket on smaller private firms in the same businesses. At a time of *guojin mintui* (the state advances while the society/private sector retreats), party ideological tentacles are extended, although in more nuanced ways.[18] Recall that "openness to new ideas and differences" is the second most valued factor for firms to choose Shanghai. Political control measures simply discount the advantage that Shanghai has developed historically. As Jing Wang trenchantly asks, "[h]ow do we begin to envision a parallel discussion of something like creative industries in a country where creative imagination and content are subjugated to active state surveillance?" (2004: 13). The new signs of ideological dominance by state power in the cultural field may reverse Shanghai's creative trajectory. For creativity to flourish in the city, the party state needs to let go its tight grip.

Conclusions

In the past decade, Shanghai's CICs have grown in tandem with the economic restructuring of the city. Behind the changing landscapes on Shanghai's old industrial sites are China's evolving socioeconomic relations. CICs represent a market-oriented, fluid, and risk-taking production culture that is a break from the city's socialist past. While the demise of traditional manufacturing sectors made Shanghai's inner city spaces obsolete, the dynamism in the new economy helped restore the city's vigor and vitality. The surveys show that Shanghai's CICs are still new economy spaces in the making. The production agglomerations are yet to mature and the socioeconomic relations among firms need to further develop. At the current stage, creative enterprises are not yet exerting a strong cultural influence on the city as the state manufacturing firms once did in the central planning period. Although creative clusters are mushrooming in the city, the name of Shanghai is still far from being associated with the notion of creativity. In recent years, the city has articulated its ambition to develop into an "Asian Creative Industries Hub" and then a "Global Creative Industries Hub" within a quarter century's time. But as both the market and the state may cripple the fledgling new industries, it is still too early to tell how transformative the current creative momentum will be and how far Shanghai's creative impulse will thrust into the future.

Dr. Sheng Zhong is currently a visiting research fellow at the East Asian Institute of the National University of Singapore. She holds a Ph.D. degree in planning (UBC). Dr Zhong's researches focus on urban transformations in China, including industrial restructuring, creative industries and the cultural economy, culture-led urban regeneration, etc.E-mail:mppshengz@yahoo.com

Notes

1 The original concept of the "new economy" is associated with the rapid rise of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the 1990s although some scholars question the differentiation between the "old" and the "new" (Hutton 2004). And the dot.com crash at the turn of the Millennium added further critical insights into these volatile industries. In geographic and urban development literature that focuses on urban spaces and agglomerations, the "new economy" concept has gone beyond the narrowly defined IT industries so as to include a broader economic sector that is dependent on creativity, knowledge and technology for input (see Scott 2000; Pratt 2000; Barnes and Hutton 2009). This may include a lot of "old" industries that has been transformed by ICT technologies, such as mass media or architectural design. In this perspective, the new economy sector is usually characterized as a combination of culture, technology and commerce and has its own spatial features and manifestations (e.g., favouring inner city sites with a creative milieu) (Hutton 2004). This understanding echoes widely-circulated term of "creative industries" or "cultural industries". In this paper, the term "new economy" assumes this broad meaning.

2 When the fieldwork was done in 2009, there were 75 such CICs in Shanghai.

3 "Creativity" and "innovation" in this paper mainly refer to those found in the economic productions or more specifically in the "creative industries" that the municipal government is trying to promote. It should also be noted that creative energies of a city go far beyond its economic sector and a clear line between creativity embodied inside and outside of the economic sector are usually hard to draw. Despite this messiness, burgeoning creative industries are usually an important component of a contemporary creative city.

4 Relevant information can also be found at http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.culture.gov.uk/PDF/ci_fact_file.pdf, accessed May 10, 2010.

5 Artists in CICs had produced sensitive art works that were incomprehensible to state bureaucrats or antagonized the authority. By exerting censorship (e.g. permission systems for putting up a performance), the Municipal Government managed to put cultural production under control.

6 If the paper does not specify, "production" means economic production; that is, the production of marketable goods or services by firms or enterprises.

7 As most of Shanghai's CICs were closed to visitors and many others were reluctant to get involved in the research, the selection of the four sites was very much reliant on the cooperative attitude of the property managers of CICs. The four selected sites all had substantial publicity in the past and were more open to researchers. The researchers (me and an assistant) tried to send a survey questionnaire to all the firms that remained open on the day of survey at the four sites except for Tianzifang that does not have a clear boundary. In the end, 229 firms were contacted and 127 completed questionnaires were collected.

8 For details of the M50 case, see Zhong (2009a).

9 See "Planning Background of Taikang Road Historic Landscape District," http://www.tianzifang.cn/newsinfo.asp?fox=37, accessed October 13, 2009.

10 See www.tianzifang.cn/about.asp, accessed October 13, 2009.

[11] Art studios and galleries were asked to skip these questions as the features of their production were straightforward.

[12] Although the restrictions on granting *hukou* (an official household registration document for Chinese nationals) to migrants had been relaxed in recent years, the policy is still in existence in China. As migrants without *hukou* are less able to obtain social security protection or social services from the local government, *hukou* restriction could become a barrier for people to move to other places of the country. Although well-educated people have better chances of getting Shanghai *hukou*, the annual quota, as well as the complicated procedure of obtaining Shanghai *hukou*, could still become an obstacle for talents from other parts of China to settle in Shanghai.

[13] At the end of 2008, roughly the period when the surveys were conducted, the average rental level for A-grade office in Shanghai was 8.1 RMB/m^2/day. See Liu, Xiuhao (January 15, 2009): "Shanghai's Office Rents Returned to 2007 Level", Wenhui-Xinmin United Press Group website at http://www.news365.com.cn/wxpd/ls/sydc/200901/t20090115_2166199.htm, accessed May 12, 2009; However, for commercial spaces, which usually occupy lower floors, the rates could be several times higher.

[14] Data from http://www.scic.gov.cn; http://www.stats-sh.gov.cn/2003shtj/tjnj/nje10.htm?d1=2010tjnje/E0304.htm; http://baike.baidu.com/view/4897607.htm, accessed March 1, 2011.

[15] For example, the most CIC land was still controlled by the old state industrial institutions that had been restructured with greater commercial orientation.

[16] About a decade ago, China's Gini Coefficient surpassed 0.4 and has been climbing since then. In 2010, it was estimated to be 0.47. See Chen Jia, "Country's wealth divide past warning level", *China Daily*, 12 May 2010, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-05/12/content_9837073.htm , accessed 31 March 2011. The enlarging gap between the rich and the poor is feared by the Chinese authority as a destabilizing factor of the country's political system and economic growth.

[17] In the reform era, commercialization is taking place at almost every realm of urban life, such as land use, housing, public space, education, healthcare, and so on.

[18] It must be noted that state cultural conglomerates, although supposedly run under market principles, are in fact under the surveillance of the state. The large number of people enlisted to sing the communist revolutionary songs recently is orchestrated by state-controlled media

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The Art of Re-Industrialisation in Shanghai

By Xin Gu

Abstract

This paper deals with the development of 'art clusters' and their relocation in the city of Shanghai. It first looks at the revival of the city's old inner city industrial area (along banks of Suzhou River) through 'organic' or 'alternative' artist-led cultural production; second, it describes the impact on these activities of the industrial restructuring of the wider city, reliant on large-scale real estate development, business services and global finance; and finally, outlines the relocation of these arts (and related) cultural industries to dispersed CBD locations as a result of those spatial, industrial and policy changes.

Keywords: Creative clusters, art, cultural industries, creative industries, urban regeneration, cultural policy, re-industrialisation

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Introduction

Since the 1980s in many western countries the arts and cultural industries have become increasingly associated with the inner urban areas of older, especially de-industrialised, cities.[1] For many commentators the urban 'new economy' lies at the heart of inner city restructuring (Scott 2000; Cooke & Lazeretti 2008; Hutton 2010; Van Heur 2010). They point to the process of replacing old manufacturing-based industrial activities with new knowledge-based industries, bringing with them new networks of production and exchange, along with new kinds of workers that transform the industrial system of the inner city. There is a 'convergence' of culture with advanced technology and manufacturing as well as other business services, and a blurring of boundaries between production and consumption (and perhaps 'high art' and 'popular culture') operating across different local and non-local communication channels. In the European and North American context the 'regeneration' of the inner city often meant an adaptive re-use of industrial land in the context of its abandonment or degradation (Feinstein 1999; Cowie et al. 2003; Vickery 2007).

Initially colonizing these derelict, marginal spaces as a kind of 'alternative economy' in the 1980s, the arts and cultural industries were increasingly sought out by policy-makers for their urban regeneration effects (enhancing first the symbolic, then the economic value of the built environment) and as harbingers of a new, post-manufacturing economy (Oakley 2011; O'Connor 2012; Hesmondhalgh 2012). That is, a kind of 're-industrialisation' of the inner city (Hill 2010). Arts and cultural industries have been attracted to the place-based networks of learning and exchange (Crewe & Beaverstock 1998 Brown et al. 2000; Bathalt et al. 2004; Currid 2007; Scott 2007), to the aesthetic and cultural associations of the built environment (Drake 2003; Shorthose 2004; Hutton 2006), and to cheap space made available by the exit of traditional manufacturing industries.

From the 1990s (though Sharon Zukin (1982) had already noted this much earlier in SoHo, New York) it became clear that arts and cultural industries and processes of urban regeneration were not always in harmony. Not only did increased symbolic value ('cool') lead to higher property prices and rent, forcing out many artists and small businesses, but consumption drove out production as retailers sought the higher 'up-market' foot traffic that came in pursuit of new kinds of leisure experiences (Lange 2005; Heur 2010). Indeed, many cities were more interested in the impact of these cultural activities on city branding, and sought to develop highly visible 'iconic' buildings or quarters for cultural consumption (often by a 'creative class' (Florida 2005)) rather than try to support the more messy, dispersed ecosystems of cultural production (Pratt 2004; Evans 2009).

In Europe and North America these processes of inner city 'gentrification' thus play out a game of de-industrialisation/ re-industrialisation in quite complex ways, as many arts and cultural industries seem constantly on the move around these

inner city areas (Hutton 2010). The arrival of artists in the inner city was central to Sharon Zukin's SoHo story: as the graffiti had it, 'artists are the storm-troopers of gentrification'. However, much literature has shown since that whilst artists might spark the initial process of gentrification they are rarely winners in the process (Ley 2003; Rantisi 2006; Markussen 2006). Similar things could be said about other small cultural clusters, such as Manchester's Northern Quarter (Bell & Jayne 2004; O'Connor & Gu 2010).

The newer Chinese cities, on the other hand, present a somewhat different face. Shanghai has also undergone dramatic de-industrialisation since late 1980s, leaving it with a huge amount of ex-industrial infrastructure. But the emergence of a new cultural economy into the city was by no means a latter-day replica of what went on in the West (O'Connor & Gu 2012). First, if we look at Shanghai, we can see that the decline of industrial activities in the inner city was never the pressing policy problem it was in these older industrial cities. After a swift transition, Shanghai quickly rebuilt a new inner city populated with a burgeoning financial services sector; urban space in the centre was only fleetingly 'derelict'. Under these circumstances, the emergent cultural economy was much more vulnerable to the pressures of an expanding real estate boom, and to local government priorities of supporting this commercial development –including the provision of housing for the newly rich local and expanding international migrant community who were to work in these new financial and business sectors (Wu & Yeh 2007). A cultural economy was never intended to be part of the plan for the new economy of the inner city in Shanghai!

Second, there has been a sharp rise in the number of white-collar workers servicing the new city centre businesses (and a concomitant decline of manufacturing workers). But the sorts of media and design services associated with this sector in western cities are still emerging and are not as integrated into this service sector as they are there. These services are underutilized, under-valued, fragmented and dispersed across the city. Indeed, the fully commercialized 'creative class' (Florida 2005), mixing artistic, bohemian and entrepreneurial values is much less developed in China generally. Arts and cultural industry workers have only just recently entered the commercial scene after decades of state institutionalization. There is a mutual lack of understanding and recognition between the arts and cultural sector and the new business services sector to which the creative industries discourse assigns so much of their activity.

In this paper I do not want to discuss any policy interventions aimed at keeping the arts and cultural industries in the inner city; rather I want to outline those factors of resilience which continue to embed these activities in locality, history, built environment and cultures of production and consumption. This is certainly not to say that arts and cultural industries are immune to urban gentrification, nor that we should fall into the neoliberal trap of letting the cultural industries fight with developers in order to prove their own worth. I simply want to argue that the arts

and cultural industries are part of the trajectory of the post-manufacturing city; that they are building complex relationships with business services, relocated manufacture, property development and urban branding strategies; and that they are also part of the social and cultural fabric of the city. As a consequence any initiatives by the national or local government to promote the 'cultural creative industries' as part of an 'innovation economy' must also begin to address the urban milieu within which they are embedded if they are to be in any way sustainable.

This paper documents the development of 'art clusters' and their relocation in the city of Shanghai. It first looks at the revival of the city's old inner city industrial area (along banks of Suzhou River) through 'organic' or 'alternative' artist-led cultural production; second, it describes the impact on these activities of the industrial restructuring of the wider city, reliant on large-scale real estate development, business services and global finance; and finally, outlines the relocation of these arts (and related) cultural industries to dispersed CBD locations as a result of those spatial, industrial and policy changes.

Suzhou Creek as the 'Artisan Cluster' – New Uses for the Post-industrial City Fringe.

The 1842 Treaty of Nanjing, which opened up Shanghai along with four other port cities to foreign trade, marked the beginning of industrialization in the city. The British began the construction of an administrative and financial centre on the bank of the Huangpu river, known as The Bund. The northern limit of this 'concession' area was marked by Suzhou Creek, one of the main entry points into the complex maze of waterways which covered the Yangtze delta region, by far the richest in China. Industrial activity emerged early around Suzhou Creek, first warehouses and then factories beginning to line its banks. Whilst initially under the managerial and financial control of the British, from the 1880s Chinese entrepreneurs began to move into the area in increasing numbers (Bergere 2009). The Zhabei district on the north bank of the creek very quickly became one of the foremost centres of both Chinese and soon Japanese-led industrialization in the city. China's first textile warehouses, flour factory, brewery and woollen factory all emerged in this area. In 1920s, there were 256 factories in Zhabei district alone – 45.23% of the entire industry sector in Shanghai (Han 2004).

From the early 1990s, the Shanghai municipal government began to move manufacturing out of these older industrial areas to sites on the periphery of the city (Zhong 2010). Empty factories and warehouses now stood as reminders of the area's older industrial past and its more recent period of building socialism – seemingly left behind by some new phase in the city's economic expansion. Ten years on from then, the urban regeneration process demanded that these ware-

houses and factories be demolished. In the meantime, these warehouses had become part of a different, unexpected kind of economy.

The take-off of art clusters occurred in less than ten years, from the first ones in the late 1990s to their rapid proliferation after 2005.[2] With the relocation of manufacturing activities to other places, Shanghai's old industrial infrastructure became the precondition for the re-industrialization by arts and cultural industries. During this period, art production, exhibition and adjacent services gathered along the banks of Suzhou Creek attracted by the cheap rent, big 'dirty' spaces and the historical resonance of the area as crucial to Shanghai identity. In the late 1990s, many of these warehouses along the banks of Suzhou Creek had been informally rented out to artists and art galleries, pre-eminent among them no. 1131 and no. 1133 West Suzhou River Road. These two buildings are still remembered by many artists because they gathered together a group of avant-garde artists and galleries, who then went on to become the face of Shanghai on the international art circuit (Zhong 2010). Within two years these artists had transformed the two old warehouses into (what were to become) model 'art clusters' in Shanghai.

It all started in 1998 when Taiwanese architect Teng Kun Yan moved into No. 1305 on the south bank of Suzhou Creek and started the 'art warehouse' movement. It was at roughly the same time that Chinese artists had become 'freelancers'. Artists, like everybody else in China, used to be employees of state entities, or 'work units' (*Danwei*). Many visual artists worked at local universities. In the 1990s the state divested itself of much direct responsibility for art and cultural employment, and many artists were forced to make a living on the (barely emergent) market (or 'jumping into the sea' as it was called, *xia hai*). This encouraged the commercialization of art and culture because the barriers (economic, legal and, to some extent, cultural) between the artists and market had finally been lifted. But things were not straightforward. First, after being institutionalized for decades, artists weren't sure how to turn what they did, what they had been trained to do, into something they could make a living from. On the other hand, though artistic ideas were exploding but there was no common measure for evaluating contemporary Chinese art. "Everyone was doing what they believed to be good art but nobody seemed to understand who should be judging it and on what basis' (interview with artist).[3] That is, the 'art world' described by Howard Becker barely existed in the city, let alone that later and more complex set of networks dubbed 'The Warhol Economy' by Elizabeth Currid (2007). Once outside state patronage artists had to look elsewhere for new ideas, new identities and new forms of recognition. These self-organising clusters in the warehouses along the creek helped artists to exchange ideas among themselves and tap into hitherto unknown international trends and networks which gradually came to replace the old state-centred system.

When artists moved into warehouses, they were entering a risky new world caught between the market – which they are not yet sure how to master or even

approach – and those state institutions from which they had just escaped. On the one hand, they didn't know where to find buyers; on the other, various associated costs of their production that used to be covered by their *danwei* were now expected to be paid from their own pocket. So the early artist clusters first, had to be cheap and second, large enough to allow the clustering of art studios. Warehouses were cheap at the time because of their temporary (unofficial, tolerated) status (nobody knew what might become of them) and had the spatial capacity for clustering. Whilst the method of clustering provided for a sharing of limited resources, at the same time it also provided a means of building reputations and generating publicity for groups of artists who would be otherwise scattered around the city. It opened the opportunity for their work to be 'spotted' by international galleries. Some artists interviewed were frank about the reason why they chose to locate in clusters: 'to be close to galleries and foreign artists'.

Art clusters are both working and living places, for artists whose work is so intertwined with their everyday life. A typical arrangement of a studio consisted of a workshop, a place for display, and a place for meeting friends, clients and media. Such a blurring of boundaries between creative production and personal business in one space is more a deliberate than an enforced choice. As one artist explained, the work itself is only part of the artistic creative practice; the rest revolves around the artists' everyday living experience. Each informs the other. The studio is where both work and social life take place. It's not strange, therefore, to see that art clusters are different to conventional business clusters in terms of daily routines. Some artists, especially those not from Shanghai originally, would sleep in their studios. Some had full time jobs and would only come to their studios at night time. The 9-5 working rhythm didn't apply in art clusters.

Spacious factories and warehouses are ideal places for exhibitions – and galleries like to be close to the artists they represent. Clusters joining production with exhibition proved to be the perfect location for galleries, who began to move into clusters in the early 2000s. *East Gallery* was among the first art galleries to locate in a warehouse. Most of the artists it represented had a studio in the same warehouse. *Shanghart* – the most well-known art gallery with its impressive collection of contemporary Chinese art – found its home in M50, an ex-factory which had begun as an refuge for artists after the demolition of the earlier warehouses in the late 1990s. The spatial capacity of the warehouses and factories supported the development of exhibitions and events which were a key part of the emergent 'art world'. *Shanghart*, for example, would host events and large exhibitions in its gallery at M50. Its spacious gallery rooms with high ceilings and attic windows (the old factory boiler room) became social salons attended by many well-known names in Shanghai's art scene.

Artists were drawn to the unique character of the clusters not only because of the spatial capacity they offered but also they represented a past that demanded appreciation before it was completely lost. The interiors of the art studios often

contained remnants of its previous usage. Old boilers, switchboards, lighting and bookshelves are now displayed as quasi-art objects to remind people of the connection between their art and this particular history. But such informal, spontaneous preservation was soon to be absorbed within the cultural tourism economy of Shanghai, which had itself become more conscious of the usefulness of such industrial heritage. The film 'Suzhou River' (Dir. Lou Ye 2000) used the area's dereliction as the backdrop for its tragic contemporary love affair. It used two of the artist's studios (Ding Yi and Zhang Engli) in No. 1131 West Suzhou Rd and seeded the idea of art clusters as tourist destinations. (Han 2004) Extensive media coverage by CCTV, CNN and NHK saw the idea of Chinese art clusters embraced by the mainstream and also brought them to an international audience. This international publicity was less about the art itself and more about the phenomenon of art clustering. It fed into the revaluation of these old warehouse spaces as key sites for the accumulation of international image value which was not to be lost on local developers.

Art-led clusters have rarely been exclusive to artists; architects and designers have frequently been ready to follow. Small design studios liked the feel of the space and the opportunity of being surrounded by 'art'. This would later infuse a new breed of businesses and commercial activities in art clusters. Some artists would become designers of commercial products at the same time as pursuing their more radical artworks. Freelance and project-based design jobs tended to happen more often to artists based in clusters because of an exchange of tacit knowledge and the formation of trust between artists and design firms located within arms length. *Canon* – a printing studio and hardware company organizes regular art shows for M50's artists and 'it's through building connections with artists and understanding local art trends, that we can develop an effective strategy within the Chinese market' (interview with *Canon Shanghai* manager).

The initial fame of clusters was owed to their 'international' identity. The first wave of artist clusters was largely unknown to the locals. One artists told me: 'only westerners and gallery owners ever come.' Since early 1980s, many international artists came to Shanghai and they soon joined those artists based in these warehouses – or as they were soon to be known, 'creative industry clusters'. These connections allowed Chinese artists to extend their networks outside China. International galleries and cultural organizations played an important role here. *Bizart* and *Shanghart* were among the earliest art galleries/ agencies aimed at opening up distribution channels for Chinese artists. The British Council also involved *Bizart* in its artists exchange programme, based at M50. Other national agencies also began to organize artist events and exchanges, though not under the 'creative industries' banner. Indeed, such exchanges weren't confined to traditional art forms, and foreign agencies made links with fashion, performing art, photography and music – the sort of connections described by Elizabeth Currid as

the 'Warhol Economy'. These foreign galleries and organizations were powerful catalysts for a new kind of contemporary Chinese 'art world'.

This clustering of artists and their networks encouraged the commercialization of these activities, and in this the galleries played a key role. Galleries gradually formalized these artistic networks into a clientele system; each gallery had its stable of artists. High-end amenities followed to serve the needs of a new kind of international visitors.[4] In time, these more commercial activities that sustained the international reputation of the clusters would produce the condition for the displacement of the production of art and culture in clusters. These early moves towards commercialization and international cultural exchanges in the art world led to the gradual accumulation of global cultural or image capital within clusters and contributed to the growing international profile of Shanghai (Wu 2006). It also legitimized the use of industrial land by 'culture' which was the turning point for Shanghai's post-industrialization – from demolition to re-structuring. As such the process would soon be captured by planners, developers and cluster managers who, in part, would halt the urban demolition process and rebrand old industrial sites based on the already viable image of these artist clusters.

The Displacement of Art from Creative Clusters

The gradual displacement of art studios from creative clusters should not be seen somehow as a result of their commercialization by galleries. Observers have pointed to the increase in display space over production as indicative of a decline in artistic authenticity (Hee et al. 2008). In fact access to markets, local (if possible) and international, was not at all seen as a bad thing by artists. The initial motivation for the clusters was, as we have said, not just about places to work but about the building of small 'art worlds' between officialdom and an unknown market. The emergence of more commercial art activities in a situation where there is very little public subsidy for art was therefore welcomed. Many artists turned their studios into display places, shifting their 'dirty space' production to cheaper sites elsewhere. The displacement that mattered was more to do with the kinds of commercial development that took place around these clusters. Early galleries had been closely embedded in the micro-art worlds of the clusters. The increasingly commercial orientation of the new CIC managers involved both a more hierarchical top-down relation to the arts and cultural tenant businesses, and a failure to take care of those aspects of place identity, aesthetics and socio-cultural networks which made clusters work for artists in the first place. They were seen as profit centres without any concomitant understanding of how to manage such complex entities (O'Connor & Gu 2012).

This displacement process emerged from the alliance of local government and property developers which was the main urban transformative force in Shanghai, as in urban China generally (Wu & Yeh 2007). It had been agreed by this 'growth

coalition' that raising the property market in old industrial areas was crucial for the regeneration of the city. Many of these areas had been associated with 'urban decay' – environment degradation, crime and lower social classes. The story of Suzhou Creek's redevelopment since the emergence of these informal art clusters in the early 2000s mainly concerns the remarkable pace of residential growth. Real estate prices rose by up to fifty times in the area adjacent to M50. It was the contribution of creative clusters – through the introduction of a new, high culture identity – to this phenomenal rise in property prices that was unexpected.

In 2005 the term 'creative industry cluster' (CIC) was formalized and adopted as a major policy plank for the promotion of the creative industries by the city (Zheng 2009; Zheng 2010). Since then, CICs became a local growth phenomenon, with over a hundred registered by 2009, and many becoming popular tourist destinations. M50, is the 'original model' of Shanghai CICs, not just as an 'organic' bottom-up unplanned cluster but because of the connection made between these activities and the owner-managers of the old factory – *Shanghai Textile Group*, a State Owned Enterprise (SOE). The artistic clustering around M50 occurred at a critical moment for SOEs, facing market restructuring but still having responsibilities to the retired workforce. The artists' adoption of warehouses represented a source of income that was at first viewed as temporary or 'better than nothing'. The combination of new businesses willing to pay higher rents; the growing international profile of these and their visitors; the increased recognition of symbolic capital by a city whose global ambitions now incorporated 'culture'; and the imprimatur given by the adoption of the term 'creative industries by the municipal government pushed the CIC model into the mainstream of local economic activity. CICs managed by state enterprises, allowed these state owned entities to upgrade their inner city assets by embracing an innovative, future looking, advanced cultural economy in a way that would be impossible with other kinds of industry. It was not just symbolic capital leading to enhanced property prices; the retention of the term 'industry' allowed existing land-use designation to remain unchanged, but now capable of commanding commercial rents. This Chinese version of the 'rent gap' led to extremely rapid investment into CICs by developers with some serious consequences for their over-supply, quality and public policy effectiveness (Zheng 2010; O'Connor & Gu 2012).

Most of the 90-odd new clusters never had any arts presence; those that did witnessed a gradual displacement thereof. Since the early 2000s, design, new media, architecture and other digital based firms started to move into the Suzhou Creek area competing for space with the older art studios. Clusters such as M50, which had always been primarily visual art clusters, started to introduce production design firms and other design based companies. Other newly formed clusters have declared that they are design exclusive. Design firms are a lot more commercial than the art businesses in outlook. They also tend to separate work and life in ways that the artists did not, using the spaces differently. They introduced the 9-5

routine into clusters which changed the atmosphere in significant ways. Although many of the new media firms initially moving into clusters were still small to medium in size, they were willing to pay for a better environment for their businesses than were the art studios – which have always resisted paying for 'renovation'. Managers and developers preferred to have formal media design businesses rather than the informal art ones. Design firms are more predictable, cooperative and commercial. They coordinate well with the routine of residential areas in terms of the 9-5 – more than the art ones: one interviewee told me 'locals complain sometimes about noise from the studios late at night…they don't know what's going on.. they worry about crimes when they see weird looking people coming in and out…'. Newly formed clusters often looked to attract design firms largely because their acceptance by residents.

Interviews with artists, cluster mangers, designers and other local residents revealed the composition of the new cultural economy along the banks of Suzhou creek. It demonstrated the tendency towards displacing artists and their studios in this area. 'Suzhou Creek' – one of the first few warehouses dedicated to emerging Chinese artists – was shut down by the local government. Interviews with the government officials suggested that it was due to health and safety issues in the building. Some key informants believe that the lack of confidence in the building's financial and social sustainability is the real reason for its shutdown. Others blame the relentless progress of urban gentrification. 'Suzhou Creek' was located in the poorest part of the city – the epicenter of Shanghai's first migrant population lived here. Although most of these local residents have been relocated, this area is now accommodating the city's new urban migrants who occupy the old houses on a temporary and illegitimate basis. Poor living conditions, rubbish and crime gave it a bad reputation in the eyes of the local district government and they couldn't wait to get rid of it. 'Suzhou Creek' like many other factories and warehouses became the victim of urban gentrification.

M50, with the highest concentration of artists and art galleries in Shanghai, became a landmark for the city's burgeoning cultural tourism, often compared to *798 Art Zone* in Beijing. M50 is a complex case. The management who first allowed artists into the old factory is still in place and represent a real accumulation of experience derived from lengthy discussions and negotiations with the artist tenants over the years. It has engaged in extensive upgrades since 2005 and has increasingly sought to bring in more galleries and commercial art activities. It has attempted to become a 'brand' and has franchised the M50 name to other art clusters well outside the city centre. This has brought criticism from observers, about the over commercialization of the cluster. However, in many ways this was also a continuation of its attempts to develop the market for art in Shanghai. Its attempts to develop an on-line resource for the contemporary art sector in Shanghai could be seen as an attempt to act as development agency in lieu of the absence of any

other forms of sector support by the government (Zhong 2009; O'Connor & Gu 2012).

If clusters are about access to work space in the context of both artistic milieu/ networks and the learning effects around developing connections to market, then at some point these functions might separate out. Spaces of artistic production are not necessarily the same as spaces of socialization or spaces of sale and display. Lily Kong's (2009) point about the confusions surrounding artistic clusters is well made (and Hans Mommaas (2009) makes similar points about clusters more generally). Beijing's *798 Art Zone* is constantly criticized for no longer being the edgy, bohemian, oppositional centre it once was; which may be true. However, one might argue that it has adopted another function, that of a primarily point of connection with the global contemporary art world. The arrival of major international galleries – such as the Saatchi Gallery– and the government decision to develop a range of prestigious art and design institutes in the area have transformed the area from an artist cluster into a piece of global art world infrastructure.

Though the location and a size of M50 (*798 Art Zone* is a much larger factory complex on the outskirts of Beijing) made it unlikely that it would follow this route, what developed around it was not commercial contemporary art activity so much as the commericialisation of artistic image. Galleries have growth up on the streets around M50 but they do not have the connections to the 'art world'; they are targeted at international cultural tourists. More pointedly, the real commercial development involved the demolition of an old machinery factory and an old-style residential building next door to M50: people are waiting for new plans although most believe that they are going to build more up-market residential buildings. The Flour Mill not far from M50 has also been demolished and was believed to be earmarked for a high end (though unspecified) 'entertainment centre'. M50, safe for now as a cultural landmark, generating cultural capital for residential development profit; the commercialization of art was a small player in comparison.[5]

Most recently the banks of Suzhou Creek have seen a quickened pace of commercialization which has further minimized the presence of artists and their activities. Many art studios have closed or relocated. Within the established art clusters, art studios have been edged out to make way for galleries, craft shops, cafes and restaurants resembling the character of an entertainment cluster. There is a substantial amount of renovation work being done to the old art clusters to prepare for these new industries. They target mainly high-end crafts shops, design firms and amenities. Teng Kun Yan's no. 1305 exchanged hands amongst many owners after him. Its current owner is renovating the building to rent it out to high-end design and architectural firms with a boutique hotel at the back of the building. This seems like not a bad plan at all considering all the high-end arts and crafts shops newly opened up in the same complex. Even the road between the river and these warehouses has had an expensive facelift. Here the commercialization of

culture is represented in the physical form of the water-front space and its association with arts and culture – not the former 'exclusive' production process of art, but the increasingly 'open' and 'inclusive' activity of cultural consumption.

In the wake of its up-market residential developments, the Suzhou Creek area is increasingly losing its 'art' identity. For the local residents, this might be nothing to regret because, after all, local residents had found limited connection with these art enclaves. It could be argued that the different perception of 'what's good for the area' between the artists and other local residents reflect the uneasiness during their period of co-existence in the same space. However, though a more open access for casual consumers might appear inclusive, and though perhaps the late night comings and goings might be more acceptable, the exclusions of local residents continue. Most CICs have guarded gates and what's on offer inside can only be afforded by tourist and local with the required taste and disposable income (cf. Zhong 2009).

That the banks of Suzhou Creek stopped being the epicenter of Shanghai's art world was not just a result of local processes of gentrification but a deliberate 'creative industries' strategy on behalf of local government and developers aiming at global image and local development profit. CICs, though ostensibly about developing the creative economy, were regarded as a variety of international business services particularly suited to old factories. The recognition of the potential of art clusters such as M50 did not result in a systematic investment in contemporary art infrastructure as in Beijing but in the utilization of 'art image' for development as usual.

The Relocation of Art to the City Centre

The analysis of art clusters in the old industrial area of Suzhou Creek demonstrates both the opportunities and the constraints faced by arts and cultural industries in revitalizing urban spaces. The limiting factor in such a process lies in Shanghai's ultimate pursuit of gaining global city status, with a concentration of international corporate headquarters and financial services. These are the dominant factors in reshaping Shanghai's new urban landscape in terms of the capital and real estate access required to sustain these industries in the city. Shanghai's district governments have always lubricated deals for international corporate actors with local developers in the conversion of the Bund financial quarter, the mega-transformation of Pudong New District and more recently in the 2010 World Expo. In the recent turn to creative industries, foreign companies have also been given priority in the marketing and branding of CICs as if this is the only way to become internationalized. In comparison, the fate of newly formed creative businesses in the city is not so auspicious. Their use of space is often temporary and volatile, as the eddies of larger development processes move through the

urban fabric. Increasingly, even temporary space is becoming scarce, making way for high-end housing and amenities in the city.

However, we might also interpret the movement of artists out of CICs into the wider city not just as a specific form of gentrification but also as indicative of a maturing (or at least mutating) arts and cultural industries ecology. The early clusters represented a refuge, an emerging 'art world' in miniature; their isolation from both official patronage structures and markets was part of the initial raison d'être of the move to the warehouses. We have also noted their isolation from surrounding communities, something perhaps to be expected in such innovative socio-cultural practices (thought replicated by the later official clusters); they were also quite isolated from the wider urban social milieu, again re-enforcing their 'enclave' status. Moving out of the official art clusters was thus also a process of re-connecting the space of their cultural production to the wider city ecology.

Many of my younger artist interviewees suggested that the official clusters were cultural industry 'prisons', separating their activity from the wider life of the city. As with arts and cultural activities in the West, these activities do not just create and trade specific goods and services but also produce and reproduce social and cultural relations and identities. Many of the social networking activities that initially took place within clusters have now opened outwards; nowhere is this more evident than in the proliferation of on-line networks, which intersect with these social networks in complex ways (Bathalt & Turi 2011). This has implications for CIC policy itself. They have been seen as profit centres, generating rent and tax revenue for the managers, owners and local government (often these are difficult to disentangle). However, many of the activities associated with clusters in Europe and North America (the original model) involved the production of public goods, public spaces and public value which fed into the wider 'creative milieu' – events, encounters, exhibitions, knowledge exchange, identity, place-making and so on. These are mostly absent from CICs in Shanghai. The sorts of socio-cultural activities engaged in by arts and cultural industries are not encouraged or accounted for in these official clusters; they are peripheral to profit. Yet the profits such CICs command came from a policy ruling that creative industries were 'industries' and thus could avoid the increased tax and rents payable for normal commercial activities (though they were themselves charging commercial rates to their tenants). The ostensible reason for this was to support the creative industries rather than operate as what is now primarily a real estate mechanism. As such there are issues around CICs as both creative industry and cultural policy strategies which need to be addressed (cf. O'Connor & Gu 2012).

Increasingly arts and cultural industries have sought to locate their activities within the spaces of the city rather than the CICs. The tendency for artists to be attracted to inner city spaces can also be read as a development of the economic, social and cultural networks in the 'art world'. Indeed, in the absence of publicly

funded alternatives, artists in Shanghai have accepted the necessity of working close to the commercial end of the art (and design) world. At the same time this commercial art world has become more developed within the space of the inner city as a whole; Shanghai's artists have followed. Although most of these inner spaces are for temporary use, it is still important for them to be close to the inner city networks – to be close to the businesses with which they have traded and untraded relationships.[6]

Shanghai's old colonial quarter, the 'French Concession' provides one of the the most important cultural landscapes in the CBD. Its old residential and office buildings were used as social housing until the 1990s when their historic character led to a widespread process of listing and preservation. Cleared of many of their original occupiers property prices soared in the area with its reputation for attracting foreign tenants and young local professionals. The planning of the area however is not so straightforward due to its complicated constituents. Some of the buildings in the area continue to be occupied by low-income families who cannot afford to move elsewhere without government subsidy. Some buildings in the area are under the ownership of military departments and central government institutions which set a number of many restraints of straightforward property dealing. On top of these factors, the preservation which created much of the symbolic capital in the local property market also constrain extensive renovation. The result was a certain level of opportunity in the area for artists.

Over the past four or five years, artists started to move into the French Concession, renting flats and buildings in the area. The things that prevented developers from engaging in major renovations and demolitions have worked in their favour. Though rents have rocketed, small scale ownership persists, allowing for lower entry levels and greater flexibility. In the French concession there is the street life that was never there in the warehouses. It is a residential and commercial area with rather blurred boundaries between work and play – which is exactly what the artists wanted. It's a more desirable area to live in, with many amenities patronized (and kept afloat) by the expat communities and professionals who work in the finance and business services in the nearby CBD. Recently the French concession has turned itself into a cultural tourism destination with foreign tourists wondering through the streets day in and day out. They form a strategic market for Chinese art. Many artists have taken the advantage of being close to their potential 'buyers'. Although some artists felt uncomfortable with being so close to their market, it is increasingly becoming a distinctive model for Shanghai based artists. There are regular art salons, exhibitions and networking events hosted in various locations in the area. Exhibitions scattered across different, unusual locations and the temporary adaptive use of older office, residential and commercial buildings from the 1960s and 1970s, replicates trends found in many western cities and feeds into Shanghai's global city discourse.

The presence of other small scale creative businesses including design, film, music, architecture, new media and photography also contributed to the character of the area attracting niche services such as coffee shops and restaurants. In comparison to the art clusters in the Suzhou Creek area, the French Concession's urban regeneration was much more intuitive, organic and smaller in scale. But even with all the difficult issues with the buildings in terms of ownerships and heritage, the distinctive development path of cultural production in the area will inevitably contribute to the acceleration of the property market. In our last round of research, it was observed that the entry rate for small businesses had risen significantly. This is likely to change the momentum of cultural activities in the area leading to an even more temporary use of the space and possibly more complicated negotiation between developers and local governments.

Conclusion

The emergence of art clusters in industrial areas along the banks of Suzhou Creek since the late 1990s came from the necessity driving artists to 'take the plunge' after being institutionalized for decades. Art clusters allowed an early accumulation of knowledge as to how to an institutionalized sector might gain access to a market about which they knew little and was dominated by major players outside China. The development of small 'art worlds' provided mutual support, resource sharing and the building of reputations and peer assessment. They also allowed the galleries and other international cultural agencies to make inroads into local Shanghai art scene. Though frequently isolated from their immediate local communities these enclaves were soon connected to wider circuits of global cultural capital. This has often been presented as a process of commercialisation driving out artists from the clusters but in fact much of this was welcomed, insofar as it opened up access to global art markets for artists with no chance of public subsidy. The real problem followed from the recognition of the global image potential of these clusters, and the development of a mechanism – the official Creative Industry Cluster policy – which allowed these clusters to become major real estate engines. The management of the clusters, with some exception, paid little attention to the sorts of 'untraded interdependencies', social networks and public goods produced by the earlier creative clusters. They were primarily seen as profit sectors for a specific kind of creative business service. In addition, even when not in themselves profitable their promotion could be seen as part of the wider redevelopment of the surrounding area in a classic form of culture-led urban gentrification.

On the other hand, the relocation of Shanghai's art industry from city fringe warehouses to the French Concession might be seen to reflect the fact that there were more opportunities for art as an 'industry' in the city core where a more incremental planning process has allowed the development of a more complex cul-

tural milieu. A new arts scene has emerged, with conversions of old residential buildings in the French concession into galleries and workshops; more recently we have seen the re-use of office buildings outside of working hours for art salons, independent film screening, music gigs, and art workshops.

From this short case study we can observe that arts and cultural industries have a more complicated correlation with inner city space than simply cheap rents and the convenient scale of buildings. If initially this seemed the case in Suzhou Creek, the isolation of these from the emerging districts of the city centre – such as the French Concession – soon suggested to many the possibility of leaving the 'enclave' and entering the inner city milieu. It would seem that the dispersal of arts and cultural business within the space of the inner city – what we might call 'organic' clusters – seems a crucial trend amongst the more commercially oriented, at least in Shanghai. It is here that they can connect with the complex network of social, cultural and businesses services that marks the 'cognitive-cultural economy' (Scott 2007) elsewhere. However, the relentless pace of Shanghai's expansion of business and financial services may not give such 'organic clusters' time to mature, as the available space for small scale, even temporary use, begins to dwindle.

Meanwhile official clusters located in non-central locations will find it increasingly difficult to attract small-scale arts and cultural businesses. They might be popular among particular cultural sub-sectors (such as product design businesses) due to their spatial capacity. Other cultural sectors such as animation and film will also favor official clusters due to national policy priorities and directives (Keane 2012). But even within these cultural sectors, we have already found certain strategic production procedures likely to be near organic clusters in the inner city. Policy makers need to recognize that the success of creative clusters cannot rely on rent subsidy and physical space alone. Policies for creative industry clusters need to prioritize smaller enterprises and recognize their reliance on adjacent industries, services and markets. But this would lead them into conflict with what at the moment is a primarily real estate growth model. The conflict between investment (political and economic) already sunk into these clusters and the growing criticism of their usefulness will be a test case of the adaptability of urban cultural policy in Shanghai in the coming years.

Dr Xin Gu is Research Associate based at Queensland University of Technology, Australia. Currently she is working on an Australian Research Council Linkage project - 'designing creative clusters in China'. She is an urban sociologist, originally from China. Her research focuses on cultural industries and urban regeneration in Chinese cities. E-mail: X1.gu@qut.edu.au

Notes

1 In this paper I use the term 'arts and cultural industries' rather than the 'creative industries'. The UK government renamed the former as 'creative industries' in 1998 (DCMS, 1998) and since then there has been much debate about terminology. The DCMS 'mapping document' included traditional art forms, industries involving 'mass reproduction' (television, recorded music, cinema etc.), new media (computer games, internet content etc.) and design related (fashion, architecture, graphic design, advertising etc.). Attempts have been made to separate the 'cultural' from the 'creative' and indeed both of these from 'the arts'. I suggest that such distinctions have been largely incoherent (Pratt 2005; O'Connor 2010) and use the term 'cultural industries' to designate those activities which involve the production of symbolic texts (Hesmondhalgh 2007). I add the term 'arts' in only to underline the fact that I include artistic activity – which is often barely commercial and does not involve mass reproduction – within the wider cultural economy of the city.

2 The consequent transformation of the area can be seen in a sequence from the 2010 film *I Wish I Knew* (discussed separately by O'Connor and Fong in this issue), directed by Jia Zhang Ke.

3 The fieldwork on which this paper is based involved over 30 interviews and 40 site visits – including more detailed ethnographic investigation in key sites. The research was conducted during five one-month field trips between January 2009 and August 2011. The research was funded by the Australian Research Council as part of a Linkage Programme: *Creative Clusters, Soft Infrastructure and New Media: Developing Capacity in China and Australia*. The partners are Shanghai Jiaotong University, Creative 100 (Qingdao) and Arup, Sydney.

4 Many of the services in clusters were initially owned and managed by artists themselves. For instance, 'the bar' in M50 next to *Shanghart* is designed by artist Xue Song and was managed by him, *Shanghart* and *Bizart* together. It was initiated to serve the needs of artists to meet and talk business outside of their studios. It was never intended to operate as a commercial business catering for the wider public. Since the formalization and expansion of creative clusters in 2005, these services are mostly run by the management companies as a key source of profit (though more often in aspiration than in reality).

5 A similar process could be seen in the 1930 millfun development. An old art deco slaughterhouse was developed a s a creative cluster, but its main business model was the generation of cultural capital in the area around it. The developers want to create an 'artistic district'. When I asked if artists would live there the development manager replied: "Of course not, they can't afford to live in the city centre". (cf. O'Connor & Gu 2012)

6 It is understandable therefore that if a cultural sector tends to maintain less commercialized (or at least to be seen as so), it will move away from the inner city. For example, Shanghai's experience is different to Beijing. Beijing's art sector related in part to the city's status as the cultural capital of China and has always distanced itself from the market. Most of the art sectors in Beijing can be found in suburban locations and artists from Beijing are renowned for not interested in 'selling' art!

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Yueju – The Formation of a Legitimate Culture in Contemporary Shanghai

By Haili Ma

Abstract

This article presents a case study of the development of a local cultural form – Shanghai Yueju – caught up in the rapid urban redevelopment of post-socialist China. Using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus' and 'distinction', it analyses the processes of the reformation of taste and class in a Chinese city. It explores the following question: can high levels of financial investment revive *Yueju* and allow it to gain market success and cultural distinction? The question is examined in the context of Shanghai's swift urbanisation process, throughout which the government has reinforced its control over not only economic but also social and cultural capital. It suggests that ignoring *Yueju*'s rootedness in a local habitus of long history and focusing only on its economic organisation has had a damaging effect on the vibrancy and viability of this cultural form. This case study of *Yueju* in Shanghai suggests that economically driven cultural development could lead to the erosion of local culture and restricting its social and cultural innovation.

Keywords: Shanghai opera, economic development, urban regeneration, culture capital, social class, taste, distinction, habitus

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Introduction

For Bourdieu 'distinction' is not just a mark of difference but of legitimacy based on power and influence: '(when the) differences are recognized, legitimate and approved', it becomes 'a sign of distinction' (Bourdieu 1991: 238). In this paper, I will show how Shanghai *Yueju* Opera becomes implicated in new strategies of distinction attempted by the Shanghai municipal government in its vision to become a 'global city'. In the first part I trace the emergence and development of *Yueju* up to the reforms of 1992. In the second part I outline the Shanghai government's use of culture in its urban development strategies. In part three I look more closely at transformations of class and consumption in post-reform Shanghai and how government attempts to reform and promote 'high quality' *Yueju* productions have been tied up in these changes. In part four I explore how this attempt to promote 'high class' productions has faced real problems in finding an audience. In the last part I look at evidence of innovative, 'grass toots' opera production and what prospects this might hold for the future.

I *Yueju* in Pre-Reform China

Prior to 1949, Shanghai's 'recognised, legitimate, and approved' forms of culture were highly diverse. Pan described the original Shanghai ethos as 'haipai', a term denoting a new configuration of Western and Chinese cultural forms which grew up in the city's relative autonomy from the rest of China (Pan 2008: 6). As the only Chinese city where migrants, refugees, entrepreneurs and scholars of different nationalities coexisted, breaking from tradition was the norm in the city. Soon Shanghai was to be the centre of the May Fourth Cultural Movement (1915–1923). Internationally, Shanghai was recognized as a unique Chinese model of modernity, reflecting the unruly spirit and hybridity of its commerce and culture (Bergere 2009).

It was against this background that Shanghai *Yueju* was born and developed. *Yueju* is a folk song derived from Shenxian town in Zhejiang province. *Yue* is the ancient name of Shenxian town in Shaoxin region and *Ju* means staged drama or opera. First performed commercially, by male peasants turned street beggars during the famine and flood period at the end of the nineteenth century, it became a popular rural concert and tea-house entertainment in Zhejiang. Shanghai was the first city in China to accommodate female workers and from the early twentieth century, a large flow of Zhejiang peasant girls came to work in Shanghai, as textile workers – and soon as *Yueju* performers (Honig 1986; Gao 1991). The first all-female troupe appeared in Shanghai in 1923 and by the mid 1930s, it had developed into the most popular cultural form among the working class migrants from Zhejiang province.

During the Japanese occupation (1937–1945), large numbers of entrepreneurs and politicians took refuge in Shanghai from nearby provinces. They turned to their local culture for nostalgia and consolation. This era was often referred to as the famous 'Shanghai Isolated Island Culture' (*Shanghai Gudao Wenhua*) (Gao 1991; Ying 2002). It was during this time that *Yueju* peaked. Large numbers of Zhejiang middle class refugees entered Shanghai and their female family members became loyal patrons of this cultural form. With their economic and political support, dozens of all-female troupes formed in Shanghai. By the mid 1940s, all-female *Yueju* grew to become the second most popular local opera in Shanghai, resting its reputation on artistic innovation (Gao 1991: 49).

Yueju as a symbol of Chinese modernity was largely due to its representation of the cultural identity of new urban women. During this period, *Yueju* had various names referring to its root in working class culture, such as 'beggar's song' 'didu song', 'Shaoxin civil opera', 'Shaoxin opera', and others. The word *YueJu* first appeared in Shanghai newspapers in 1927, and in 1938 'Shanghai Theatre World' *(Xiju Shijie)* first used 'all-female *YueJu'* to describe this art form (Gao 1991: 68 - 71).

Post 1949 Shanghai's *haipai* identity was always viewed with suspicion by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP hereafter), who saw it as built on western power, capitalism and 'decadence'. However, Shanghai all female *Yueju* received the direct patronage of the CCP and flourished for reasons I explain below.

To the CCP, culture was for mobilising mass power for the winning of the revolution (Schwartz 1968: 173; Mackerra 1983: 479). By the end of 1940s, over 85 percent of the population was illiterate; in this context folk art, such as *Yueju*, was regarded highly by the CCP as form of education (Mackerras 1983: 158). The later premier Zhou Enlai, defined opera as: 'A vital educational weapon of national spirit and patriotism because it has an intimate connection with the masses' (quoted in Ying 2002: 178). As the majority of those illiterate were women (Cohen 1986), *Yueju*'s popularity amongst working class females was viewed as an important educational tool by the CCP. Throughout the 1950s, and before the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, under direct CCP political and economic support we see the establishment of the *Shanghai Yue Ju Company* (SYC hereafter) symbolizing the institutionalisation of *Yueju*. By the mid 1960s, *Yueju* had grown to become the second most widespread opera form in China, with the SYC being the largest state *Yueju* opera house.

Despite its being heavily promoted by the national government, *Yueju*'s popularity declined as a result of 'over politicized' production from the early 1960s (Fu 2002; Ying 2002). During the ten years of the Cultural Revolution only eight model operas (*yang ban xi*) were performed nationally, with all other opera and cultural forms denounced. By the end of the 1970s, with at least two generations having grown up with little cultural exposure or education, *Yueju*'s popularity in Shanghai declined to its lowest historical point. Between the 1980s and 1990s,

Yueju was widely regarded as the opera for the elderly and middle aged female audience, most of whom were first generation Zhejiang immigrants and who were the poorest with the lowest education in the post-Mao economic reform era. Like many other opera forms in China at the time, *Yueju* was widely regarded as a folk culture format associated with the lower social classes.

In 1992, after Deng announced China's further economic development and giving Shanghai more autonomy in economic and cultural reforms, Shanghai was on its way to become the 'Paris of the East'. It is during this time that traditional culture formats found their way back into mainstream society.

II The Decentralised State: Building Economic and Cultural Capital in the new Shanghai

Since the economic reforms began in 1979, increasing power has been devolved from central to local government (Zhang 2004). Regional governments act as 'managers' for regional economic development with the central government retaining the right to change the 'manager' of each regional government at will. In this way, the central government retains control over the regions, whilst the regional government is highly motivated in economic development. So long as the regional government follows the central government's general line, it gains immense power in regional development. As might be expected, this creates the conditions for frequent clashes between the central and local government. However, whilst local governments have inherited much of the economic development responsibilities from the central government, culture remains under the direct supervision of the central government for political reasons. I will argue that the separation between economic development and cultural development at the local level has affected the redevelopment of *Yueju* in significant ways in Shanghai.

Shanghai, as the 'head of the dragon', holds a leading role in the economic development of the Yangtze river delta. Not only economic: in the decentralised China of today, the Shanghai government represents what Bourdieu describes as 'the concentration of the different species of capital,' which 'leads to the emergence of a specific, properly statist capital which enables the state to exercise power over the different fields and over the different particular species of capital, and especially over the rates of conversion between them' (1998: 42). That is, the Shanghai government plays a significant role not just in the accumulation and distribution of economic capital but also that of cultural capital – what is and what is not to be seen as 'legitimate culture'.

From the mid-1990s, as Shanghai received the green light for economic development, the city also launched a wholesale reconstruction of the cultural landscape. In its attempts to 'Manhattanise' Shanghai the municipal government mobilised its long association with 'modernity' as part of its re-invention as the new Asian metropolis for the 21st century.

As a statement of intent two new cultural symbols were built in Shanghai. The Shanghai Grand Theatre, built in 1998 at a cost of 1.2 billion RMB, the first purpose built theatre in China aiming to cater for large-scale international performing arts, was placed in the People's Square at the heart of the city centre. In 2005, the Shanghai Municipal Government invested another 1 billion RMB into building the Shanghai Oriental Art Centre in Pudong, the new financial and commercial centre. Both edifices aim to be symbolic of Shanghai's aspirations to enhanced cultural status in the eyes of the international art world, hosting a wide range of Western productions, from *Swan Lake* to *Cats* and from the Berlin Philharmonic to the British Royal Ballet. These developments marked the commercialisation of 'high' culture in Shanghai, attempting to move these off state subsidy by appealing to more high spending and foreign audiences. It thus also marked the acceleration of a disconnect between a globally facing cultural profile and the everyday reality of locally produced culture. Fu Jin, a leading Chinese opera social critic explained:

> The Grand Theatre hosts 90 percent of Shanghai performing programmes and marks its legitimacy through high prices. Instead of old, small to medium theatre rental fees of between ten and twenty thousand RMB per performance, for a troupe to enter the Grand Theatre, the rental cost is between 100 and 130 thousand RMB per performance. A popular saying in Shanghai opera houses today is: 'In the pre-1978 reform era, you worried about not having productions good enough to enter a theatre. Today, you worry that you don't have enough money to enter a theatre. (Interview 9/7/2008)

High prices, together with the western buildings, inject a sense of 'legitimacy' into the cultural forms hosted by these grand cultural edifices. The construction of a new cultural infrastructure also coincided with the wide scale urban development of Shanghai from the early 90s. As a result, there has been a demolition of 'illegitimate' cultural infrastructure: many of the small and medium theatres in old residential districts in the city, which have existed since the end of the nineteenth century and are directly associated with traditional operas, are on the list to be knocked down.

These buildings are important to local opera development not only because they have existed for nearly one hundred years but also they were symbols of a local opera culture. Under Mao, performances were continually generated in these small to medium theatres to bring culture closer to the people. But in the recent urban regeneration, these community based theatre spaces are seen as old fashioned and too small for Shanghai. But above all, the lands they occupy are now too expensive for 'cultural' uses. They are disappearing to make place for the new Shanghai. The demolition of the old theatre districts has had a devastating effect on the development of local opera by separating it from its audiences. The famous saying amongst opera companies in Shanghai is 'each time we hear the word "regeneration" we get nervous; urban regeneration removes theatres as well as our

audience.' By the end of the 2000s, *Yifu* Theatre is the only one remaining in the People's Square, where dozens of theatres used to be found.

III Taste and Class in the new Yueju

In order to allow local cultural forms to enter these newly built cultural spaces, the municipal government had to legitimize them first. This involved a hefty state subsidy to reform the business model and target a completely different kind of audience.

In 1999 under leadership of former Shanghai Mayor Gong Xueping, a joint partnership was formed between the Shanghai Grand Theatre and the SYC, namely the Dream of the Red Mansion Ltd. Xu Peilin, a local cultural entrepreneur, explained that the Shanghai municipal government invested 2 million RMB in producing the *Luxury-Style Dream of the Red Mansion (Haohuaban Hongloumeng*), to be staged in the Grand Theatre for free (interview 8/6/2008). The *Luxury-Style Dream of the Red Mansion* is the most expensive *Yueju* production ever produced by the SYC. Borrowing words from Gong XuePing, the aim of the production, according to SYC director You Boxin to make Yueju 'bigger and more extravagant' in order to 'boost the *yueju* market' (Interview 8/7/2008). In an era when scale and expense becomes a way of measuring legitimacy and distinction (Wang 2009), Shanghai *Yueju* has to abide by the rules in order to become legitimate.

In addition to annual subsidies, the government provided an additional 200,000 RMB to promote the show including having it advertised for six months in 'rotation form' (*gundong*) on the TV, radio and internet – all for free. It was also advertised on the city centre highway bridges to catch wider audiences. This was in a city where advertising fees had reached 38 million RMB a year for five-seconds of prime-time advertising (Zhao 1998: 58). Such practices aimed to raise the status of *Yueju* from its folk cultural roots into 'high art' (*gaoya yishu*), to attract the Shanghai elite culture.

From 1999 to 2002, this *Luxury-Style Dream of the Red Mansion* was performed a total of thirteen times in the Grand Theatre. Tickets were sold at 1000 RMB per person for the first show and for the following 12 shows at 500 RMB per person, which were the most expensive Chinese opera tickets ever sold in the market. People queued to get into the theatre and it was difficult to obtain a ticket without reservation. The scene was described as a 'once in a hundred years event (*bainian buyu*)'. The programme seemed to have awakened the audiences' love of Shanghai *yueju*. It became the most talked about subject in town at the time. The SYC vice president, the star performer of the Jia Baoyu character in this show, Qian Huili, stated in proud tones: 'No other opera had ever entered the Grand Theatre before, we are the first!' (Interview 8/6/2008).

It was through the local government's support that Shanghai *Yueju* was rediscovered and repackaged. In its process of being 'recognized, legitimized and approved', *Yueju* becomes 'a sign of distinction' (Bourdieu 1991: 238). With the backing of the officials, Shanghai *Yueju* was established as a legitimate and approved form of culture to be consumed by the elite class in the city.

Bourdieu points out that cultural consumption is never an isolated social act but is meant to separate classes: 'All cultural practices (museum visits, concert-going, reading etc.) function as markers of class' (Bourdieu 1984: 1). With the glamourizing of *Yueju*, the consumption of this cultural form involved new distinctions of class and taste. However, Bourdieu emphasises that although we may appear to have a choice in classification through taste, those excluded from legitimate taste because of financial and education reasons, tend to internalise this exclusion. Bourdieu calls this internalisation of the exclusion about which we can do little the 'taste of necessity' (Bourdieu 1984: 234). We can see this occurring as *Yueju* was increasingly marketed to audiences with high economic and social capital. In their attempt to legitimize *Yueju*, the Shanghai government envisaged the emerging middle class as the main consumer group and thus felt it necessary to scale up the performances for the new elites in the city. This group has very different economic and educational status from the traditional *Yueju* audience.

Bourdieu stated in *Distinction that* 'preferences in literature, painting or music are closely linked to educational level (measured by qualifications or length of schooling) and secondary to social origin' (Bourdieu 1984: 190). How has *Yueju* been adapted to the young middle class after having been long associated with the old and the poor in the city?

Most young middle class Shanghainese lack knowledge of traditional Chinese culture due to the period in which they grew up. Born in the 1960s and 1970s when culture, especially traditional Chinese culture, was being systematically erased by the Cultural Revolution, this generation has grown up with minimal exposure to traditional Chinese opera. The historical scenes of children watching opera in an open market space, hanging from rooftops and trees with their peers or sitting with parents could now only be read in novels. For many of the new middle class, cultural consumption through such forms of everyday social practice no longer occurs. They do not possess the knowledge to appreciate Chinese operas as did their parents' generation.

Scholars have observed high levels of foreign educational and cultural knowledge in the habitus of many Chinese youth during Mao's era. Hamm, in *Music and Radio in the People's Republic of China* (1991), highlighted how the young generation of the 1950s was raised on Russian literature. In order to restore the image of internationalization, the government was always keen to introduce western culture to 'educate the good youth' since China's open door policy. Mackerra (1983) stated that in the post-Mao era, the majority of urban youth took up western culture instead of Chinese traditional culture in order to show a level of

openness, international knowledge and cosmopolitan attitude. Gaining economic and social advance was the priority during this period, and in Shanghai this was exhibited through a distancing from traditional Chinese culture and aspirations to deal with foreign businesses and foreign culture.

This middle class also includes the new migrants with high educational capital. The Shanghai Government was one of the first to relax the *hukou* system installed to prevent internal (especially rural-urban) migration. In 1992 alone, net immigration rose from 14,600 to 21,600. Immigrants were mainly university graduates. In 1994 the net figure jumped to 74,200, the highest since 1980. The majority of the migrants allowed into Shanghai were university graduates from all over China – only those with a masters' degree or above were permitted in, resulting in the new 'golden collar' class (Wei 2008: 13). This newly admitted well-educated class, along with the local middle class shanghainese, is the driving forces of cultural consumption in Shanghai.

The traditional *Yueju* audience came from a very different historical formation. The majority of the *Yueju* audience in post-Mao's era is middle aged and elderly women. They don't like to go to the grand cultural sites, such as the Grand Theatre, the surroundings of which are highly unfamiliar to them. Even if they do, their usual opera watching habits, such as chatting and snacking whilst watching performances are highly undesirable to the new middle class consumers.

Therefore, the intention behind the production of the *Luxury-Style Dream of the Red Mansion,* was to package *Yueju* for middle class consumption, with its beautiful stage sets, pretty women, facile adventures, frivolous conversation and reassuring philosophy suited for the city's 'bourgeois' audience who are also able to afford high prices (Bourdieu 1984: 234). High production costs have to be matched by high-ticket prices. Especially as from the early 1990s, the Shanghai Municipal Cultural Bureau and the Shanghai Municipal Consumer Price Bureau stopped subsidies for all opera companies. Opera tickets rose from one or two RMB in the early 1990s, to between 120 RMB and 1000 RMB at the current time.

It is not new for the government or institutions to separate out classes through price based cultural consumption. DiMaggio (1977) points out that, in the 1860s, producers in America sometimes purposely raised production costs to create 'high art' as opposed to 'low art' in order to separate the classes. In the case of Shanghai, there may not have been an explicit purpose to separate classes as in 19th century Boston, nevertheless the imposition of high production costs through the withdrawal of subsidies and an insistence on the 'luxury style' has *de facto* resulted in such a separation. The majority of the population in Shanghai has no access to such culture. It is through high ticket pricing that *Yueju* became associated with elite cultural and economic status.

IV Desperately Seeking the Audience

In China, due to Mao's egalitarian policies, social distinctions around economic capital only started to emerge in earnest after the 1980s. The middle aged bourgeois audience, with high economic capital, central to Bourdieu's account of the cultural field, was absent in China. *Yueju*'s traditional audience is pre-1949 emigrants from nearby Zhejiang province who are reluctant to spend excessive amount on cultural activities. As noted above, the majority of these were illiterate or semi-illiterate. Although this group were a quite well-established urban working class in the 1980s (Chan 1985), as the market economy took off in the early 1990s they were about to become amongst the losers. In the mid 1990s, ten million workers were laid off, of which seventy percent were women, aged thirty and above (Tian and Chu 2000: 155). Due to their low educational level, many could not find work afterwards. Warde (1993) pointed out that middle aged and elderly females make up the lowest economic, social and educational group in cities such as Shanghai. This group is referred to as the 'disadvantaged group' (*ruoshi qunti*) (Goodman 2008: 39). The high ticket price often leads to them being excluded from entering the Grand Theatre to taste *Yueju*.

What about the new middle class? Economically, the middle class's consumption power has been 'greatly exaggerated' (Jiang 2007: 3). In Shanghai, this is directly associated with the high costs of the housing market as well as other living costs (health and education, for example). Since the beginning of the property boom in 1992, Shanghai has seen the fastest rise in house prices in China. Those government employees who were assigned ownership of flats by their work units and 'those dodgy businessmen who bought state assets from government friends during the fire-sale days of the late 1980s and early 1990s' (Bell 2008: 26) were amongst the winners in this property game. This process also contributed to the rapid emergence of an urban poor. In an article on *International Advertising*, a Chinese market analyst describes what happened in Shanghai:

> Why have people felt that their money is not worth a penny? Home ownership expenses keep shooting up […] last year, the salary rise for individual residents was an average 10.4 percent, yet the private housing market went up as high as 21.7 percent. In 2004, housing took up 22.6 percent of a household's total expenditure. The increase over spending on food, clothing, medical services, cultural consumption and entertainment was reduced to a slim 9.5 percent. (Yuan 2005: 56)

With the rise of the property market, large numbers of Shanghai residents lost their spending power to high mortgage repayments, often becoming what is popularly known in China as 'the house slave' (*fangnu*). Cultural consumption and entertainment were squeezed.

Finally, rural workers make up around 70 percent of the national population. However, their rural registration and low educational level means they are often viewed as 'illegal migrants' in the cities. Their consumption capacity falls behind urbanites by at least ten to fifteen years (Jiang 2007: 3, 8). They are the least likely to spare their cash for entertainment.

Thus we have the established migrant working class who have the cultural connection with *Yueju* but were excluded because of the high ticket price; the young middle classes who should be able to afford these but lack the cultural connection and anyway are tied up in the property game; and the new working class made up of temporary peasant workers, with extremely low educational, economic and social status in the city, and denied effective access to any form of cultural consumption in the city.

So much for the taste of necessity; what of luxury? Who are the new *Yueju* consumers in Shanghai? Shanghai Performing Art Company Director Ding Zhiyuan gave a good picture of the demography of *Yueju* audiences:

> According to our database, there is a regular ballet audience of around 3000 in Shanghai; a regular concert audience of around 4000, most of them are white collar workers. Some of them maybe described as 'a pretending audience', sitting there to give themselves a new identity. However, after a period of time, they will fall in love with Western art. Out of all operas, *Yueju* is the most popular opera and has the best market. We have a loyal regular *Yueju* audience of around 400, and the number is slightly lower for *Jingju* and *Huju*. […] The *Yueju* audience is a mixed group; in terms of age, twenty percent are between their teens and thirty, sixty percent are thirty to forty five year olds, and twenty percent are forty five years and above. Especially in the last few years, with the promotion of young performers, their own fans began to emerge, and of course they are all young people, of the same age as the performers. (Interview 8/7/2008)

This is a rather astonishing record, that in a city with a population of twenty million, there are around 7,000 to 8,000 regular western cultural consumers but only 400 for the *yueju*, which is regarded as the most popular local art form, with other opera forms attracting even less. This confirms that the middle class consumers have a better taste for western culture than for local Chinese culture. The newly built cultural infrastructure in the city reinforces such western oriented cultural consumption patterns. When interviewed Chinese opera social critic Fu Jin explained that the Shanghai Grand Theatre attracted the highest audience attendances, but that ninety percent of its performing art programme was western, leaving the small balance to local opera (9/7/2008).

Yueju will have to compete with these western cultural performances for revenue. According to Wu and Yusef (2002), Shanghai is acquiring the social shape of an 'onion dome' with fifteen percent forming an elite layer, and eighty five percent the 'have-less' class' (p. 6). This small elite consists of people with educational, economic, as well as political capital. As Andreas (2009) in *Rise of the Red Engineers* argued, a new elite 'technocratic' class emerged after Mao's era, based on the combination of older educational capital with the new political capital gained through the 1949 revolution. This elite class not only has educational capital also political ties with the central and local government enabling them to obtain crucial access to economic capital in the early economic reform era of 1980s and 1990s. It is this top 15 percent elite population that could develop the taste of 'luxury' – consuming the legitimate art at the legitimate sites.

The formation of such a small class having the taste of 'luxury' is supported by the Shanghai Municipal Government. An anonymous official in the Shanghai Media stated: 'High ticket prices are marked up purposefully to be purchased as presents, often for government officials, enterprises, and other networking purposes. It is not really for the consumption of the people' (Interview 9/6/2008).

Foreign expats are also among the elite group who has been given the privilege to consume Chinese culture. The manager of the Shanghai Performing Art Company, Ding Zhiyuan insisted that shows in the Grand Theatre should not have 'any yellow faces' (Interview 8/7/2008). Professor Fu Jin, despite his criticism of the grand cultural buildings, approved the high-rise ticket prices for the 'Red Mansion': 'It is a grand version of the performance; a lot of effort and money has gone into making this opera. I don't think that it should be consumed by everyone, it should just belong to a certain group of people' (interview 8/6/2008). In this view, the perception of *Yueju* as a cultural form for the 'poor' needs to be changed to that of 'high art' for the Shanghai elites.

During this period, when the municipal government was promoting the 'taste of luxury' they knew very well that there was a large number of 'flawed consumers' who, as Bauman's wrote: "…do not have the means to truly enter the shopping mall at all, do not have the means to truly enter into the consumer game'. They were also aware that 'these consumers are leading to social degradation and "internal exile"' (Bauman 1998: 38). But it is a priority to the municipal government to upgrade cultural infrastructure to match Shanghai's new global cosmopolitan image. Granting right of access to a small group of high income professionals in the city and excluding low income people is their means of creating a sense of cosmopolitan glamour for the city.

We also need to be aware of the heavy cost of such glitzy promotions and the dire consequences of short term commitment – as such high profile public subsidies to culture are likely to be. After the 'luxury' version of the *Dream of the Red Mansion*, the government has never invested in another similar scale opera production, and opera did not enter the Grand Theatre throughout the 2000s. In 2008, the SYC entered the Oriental Art Centre, performing the complete version of *Dream of the Red Mansion*. This time it was staged only twice. *Yueju*'s inability to prove itself worthy of economic investment to the local government through attracting self-sustaining funds was the main problem. *Yueju* faded from the position of 'most talked about cultural form in town' soon after the local government ceased its support.

Meanwhile, large numbers of *Yueju* fans are greatly deterred by the high price and grand, yet alien, theatre locations. *Yueju*'s new legitimate status failed to attract either its traditional or its intended middle class audience.

V *Yueju* – Surviving through the 'Black Box'

Having lost direct government's support, *Yueju* has been increasingly marginalised by the Shanghai Grand Theatre, to the degree that many people struggle to see *Yueju*. In reality, it is still regularly performed and popular amongst local audiences. In opposition to the emphasis on large productions and costly marketing, these performances are much smaller in scale, produced by individual SYC artists outside SYC working hours and they have managed to attract younger audiences. However, due to expensive advertisement fees and the illegality of performing in 'informal' venues, it is only the 'inner circle' of artists who know where productions may be staged. These performances mainly take place in universities, in small enclosed theatre spaces known as a 'black box' (*hei xiazi*).

In 2009, I was on an international opera exchange visit to Shanghai. The host team of Chinese theatre academics, government high officials and entrepreneurs struggled to provide us with information on contemporary Chinese opera performances by saying: 'It is very difficult to find such performances in Shanghai. They are either traditional operas, or modern dramas'. The international group in the end agreed to watch a modern drama at the Shanghai Theatre Academy. As we entered the theatre, I happened to see a small poster in the corridor, advertising a new *yueju* production in the next building. It turned out to be a very refreshing experience – no grand production and no star performer but young performers, trying to experiment with new ideas. The theatre of around fifty seats where it performed was full. There was an after-show discussion between the audience and artists around *Yueju* production in general and the theme of this show. The high spirit shared by the artists and audience in this theatre is rarely seen in today's legitimate theatre spaces.

The audience was mainly opera artists, young professionals and students. The relatively inexpensive tickets are affordable for most young people. The success of these black box performances makes a powerful contrast to the Grand Theatre in their promotion of local culture. In fact, the Grand Theatre, despite its high culture intake, has been unsuccessful in promoting this culture as a business proposition. Whilst high production costs might momentarily change the public perception of *Yueju*, it is difficult to change what it is as a historically evolved cultural format and the associations that go with that. *Yueju* derived from local folk culture and its roots within it cannot be completely erased in search of new kinds of audiences and profit.

Zhao Zhigang, former Vice President of the SYC, is now one of the main contributors to 'black box' productions and shared his delightful creative experience with the young audience while performing in a black box venue:

> I performed *Yueju Hamlet* in a "black box" small university theatre. There were no props on stage. I came out all in white, one spot light on me. I walked down, amongst the audience, looking for my deceased bride. Suddenly, a phone went off, so I said: "Whose phone was it, switch it off please!" You could imagine the audience were furious. Then I took the phone out of my own pocket and answered it,

> carried out a dialogue which was supposed to be between myself and my deceased bride […] then in the next scene I walked amongst tomb stones, but I used the audience as tomb stones and walked amongst them. When I cried in front of my deceased bride, I held a female audience member as if she was the tomb stone, she was really scared! Everyone enjoyed this *Yueju* production. (Interview 9/7/2008)

Although the black box has ignited some hope for the revival of *Yueju*, its future is still uncertain without this cultural form being exposed to a wider local audience. The hidden space of the black box can only offer a temporary alternative to the expensive grand theatre and the fast diminishing old theatres; it cannot guarantee the availability of *Yueju* in the long term. Without local government support – as part of everyday rather than elite culture – the development of *Yueju* will remain hidden and illegitimate.

Conclusion

In China's vast economic development era, cultural production and consumption are becoming increasingly commercialised. Many forms of local culture are repackaged to serve an elite class with high economic, social and political capital. Although *Yueju* has gained some high cultural ground by being promoted by the government, it is losing its connection both with its actual and potential audience, and with those who are essential to the evolution of *Yueju* in terms of content production. Local government is influential in preserving and transforming local culture in many ways, but with its eyes on a global audience it has promoted the connection between legitimate culture and up-market consumption. Such a strategy may well be short-lived. I have argued that it might be possible to change the perception of certain cultural forms for a short time – through heavy promotion and restricting access – but it is difficult to change the culture – its social and aesthetic roots – so rapidly and so instrumentally. *Yueju* was briefly turned from popular culture to high art through government support and allowed to occupy a highly visible space, only to then find itself struggling to attract the right audience. Once the government's support ceased it was impossible for *Yueju* to continue this 'up market' route. This situation was made worse by the scarcity of formal performance spaces and the inaccessibility of grand cultural facilities to small local performances. Although *Yueju* has managed to sustain itself through performing in cheaper and smaller scale venues, access by the wider public remains restricted without the support and acknowledgement of local government.

There are however other examples in China which might point to possibilities of changing cultural policy in Shanghai, in order to sustain the long term development of *Yueju*. For example, the Zhejiang government views *Yueju* as essential in building its local cultural identity and subsidises performances through providing free venues to opera companies whose actors have won the Plum Flower award (the highest award for opera performers in China). The Hong Kong government too provides local cultural performances with generous subsidies. When

SYC performed in Hong Kong, in a similar scale theatre to the Shanghai Grand Theatre, they were charged only 13,000 RMB for four days' rent – much cheaper than the 100-130,000 RMB per performance to rent the Shanghai Grand Theatre (Xu Peilin, Interview, 8/6/2008).

In 1945, Yuan Xuefen and other star Yueju performers wanted to build their own theatre so that artists would not be exploited by backstage managers and could develop *Yueju* (Gao 1991; Yuan 2002). Sixty years later, in 2008, Li Li, the current Director of the SYC stated: 'If only we had a theatre of our own, we could perform regularly, we could experiment, we could develop. At the moment we can do nothing but survive' (Interview 9/7/2008).

Dr Haili Ma was a professional *Yueju* Xiaosheng (male impersonator) at Shanghai Luwan *Yueju* Company before moving to the UK. After completing a PhD at the Univesity of Leeds, she is now running her own Consultancy for inter-cultural theatre productions. E-mail: haili@maculturalassociates.com

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(Re-)Reading Shanghai's Futures in Ruins: Through the Legend of an (Extra-)Ordinary Woman in *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow: A Novel of Shanghai*

By Ian Ho-yin Fong

Abstract

This essay is an allegorical reading of Shanghai futures through a fictive woman, Wang Qiyao, in Wang Anyi's novel, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow: A Novel of Shanghai* (1996). The novel is about her life in China from the 1940s to the 1980s. Using Benjamin's critique of 19th century Paris in relation to Shanghai in the 1930s and 1940s ("the Paris of the Orient") the essay examines questions of phantasmagoria, nostalgia, memory and awakening and relates these to the possible Shanghai futures to come.

Keywords: *Longtang*, Walter Benjamin, phantasmagoria, allegory, nostalgia, ordinariness

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I Modernity: Phantasmagoria and Ruin

Wang Qiyao and Shanghai

> In the afternoon, when the phonograph plays next door, that's Wang Qiyao humming along with "Song of the Four Seasons." Those girls [rush] off to the theater …There is a three-mirrored vanity in her bedchamber. … The fashion trends in Shanghai rely completely upon Wang Qiyaos. But they are incapable of setting things into motion … Uncomplaining, they carry the spirit of the times on their backs … Between the media and the stage, there are men working behind the scenes to create a fashion perfectly suited to Wang Qiyao, a fashion that moreover seems to anticipate Wang Qiyao's every need and desire. (Wang 2008: 22-4)

Wang Qiyao is "the typical daughter of the Shanghai *longtang* " (22) which are "vast neighborhoods inside enclosed alleys", and are "the backdrop of this city" (3).[1] Her story is the story of every Shanghai girl, and is, at the same time, the novel of Shanghai,[2] as reflected in the subtitle of the novel. Wang "walks" from capitalism in the 40s, socialism in the 60s, to capitalism with socialist characteristics in the 80s. She is different from Mrs. Dalloway. Her life is not compressed in a day; rather, the modern development of China is compressed in her life.

A film director says that Wang Qiyao looks like Ruan Lingyu (1910-35), a legendary Shanghainese film star in 1930s. (35) Both women are models for their Shanghai girl contemporaries to follow. The life of Wang, an ordinary girl dreaming of an extraordinary modern life, is as tragic as Ruan's. Both tragic lives are related to something which is not true. Ruan committed suicide because of a rumour against her, and left several suicide notes. One of them writes, "Gossip is a fearful thing." (Meyer 2005: 61) Wang lives in illusion, and is finally awakened at the end of her life:

> The last image caught in Wang Qiyao's eyes was that of the hanging lamp swinging back and forth. … [S]he was trying hard to figure out where she had seen it before. Then, in the last moment, her thoughts raced through time, and the film studio from forty years ago appeared before here. … There, in that three-walled room on the set, a woman lay draped across a bed during her final moments; above her a light swung back and forth, projecting wavelike shadows onto the walls. Only now did she finally realize that *she* was the woman on that bed – she was the one who had been murdered. And then the light was extinguished and everything slipped into darkness. (Wang 2008: 429)

Forty years ago, what she saw was the opposite:

> The set locations may have been dilapidated and in despair, but the images captured by the camera were always perfectly beautiful. On one or two occasions they actually saw some of those famous movie stars, who sat in front of the camera doing nothing, like a collection of *idle props*. Films scripts were revised at random, and in the blink of an eye even the dead could come back to life. (Wang 2008: 34; my italics)

Wang Qiyao is murdered at the end of the novel which, ironically, is set in the background of the new era of China in the 1980s. (What is the implication then if the novel is the novel of Shanghai?) It seems that the whole novel sarcastically

describes her life as an independent woman with a strong will to live no matter what hardship she encounters. In order to understand the tragedy of her life, it is necessary to read the beginning and the end of the novel again. When she is dying, she sees the phantasmagoric image ("the hanging lamp swinging back and forth"), and is awakened to the fact that the murdered woman she saw in the film studio at the beginning of the novel was her; in other words, contrary to what she saw in the film studio, she is dead right from the start. She is the living dead; and her fate has been sealed from the beginning. What is more tragic is the fact that she only realizes this at the end of the novel. The phantasmagoric (glamorous, but broken) image blinds her from seeing the dark side of her life. Her life in Shanghai is like a filmic dream. If she had had the ability to read the film studio scene differently right at the beginning of the novel, different futures might have opened to her.[3] Or, to read her fatalistically, Wang is framed to see what she can see. The imagined futures/fates of the city design her life.

The essay discusses whether the tragedy of Wang Qiyao sets the path for the future of Shanghai to follow, and, above all, how her awakening at the end of her death might provide any lessons for Shanghai's futures. Modern capitalist development can be seen as a phantasmagoric dream for which Wang in the 1940s ardently longs. Below we see how Benjamin's reading of nineteenth-century Paris as a phantasmagoric city is relevant to reading Shanghai's future in a critical light. If, to follow Benjamin, phantasmagoric modern life constitutes the ruinous life in Paris, it is a *tragedy* that Shanghai, the "Paris of the Orient", repeats the Parisian fate in the 1940s. And it would be a *farce* if the city cannot re-read its own past to live a future differently in the twenty first century. If the past is read differently, will the future will be different? We need to be cautious about a reading that suggests Wang does not yield to her fate, and is in control of her life by asserting her bourgeois lifestyle in the socialist China after 1949. Is the retention of a 1940s modern style of living an attempt to romanticize Old Shanghai? Does her nostalgia weaken her critical facilities and delay her awakening? In other words, her nostalgia imposes a reactionary reading of her life, and it leads to her tragedy.

After 1949, Wang lives in a nostalgic and melancholic mode with the disappearance of her glamorous life on the social stage and is left only with an ordinary life in the *longtang*; in other words, being "haunted" and framed by the past, she loses the ability to re-read, and to escape from the burden of the past. With reference to Abbas's discussion of Stanley Kwan's *Center Stage* (1992) ("the biography of Ruan Lingyu" (Abbas 1997: 44) and of the Shanghainese film industry in the 1930s) and Jia Zhangke's *I Wish I Knew* (2010), I discuss how the past can be re-read differently so that Wang Qiyao could have realized her fragmented and illusionary life earlier and have perceived other possibilities of life ahead; otherwise, she can only have the same as destiny as Ruan who lacks the ability to re-read her situation, and cannot escape from tragedy.

Modernity and Phantasmagoria

> … [A]fter Deng Xiaoping's 1992 visit, and within the space of a few years, the Pudong area of Shanghai across the Huangpu River from the Bund has developed into a mini-Manhattan, following Deng's agenda for it: "A new look each year, a transformation in three years". … In a few short years, Shanghai saw the construction of over a thousand skyscrapers, a subway line, a highway overpass ringing the city, another bridge and tunnel across the Huangpu to Pudong, and the urbanization of Pudong itself, now coming into being before our eyes like the speeded-up image of time-lapse film. (Abbas 2000: 779)

Reading contemporary Shanghai is like seeing a film. The images are gone while the understanding of them is still in the process of construction. No single, definite, and dominant reading is possible. When something is said, it already means another thing. Allegorical thinking is the response to the phantasmagoric (etymology: phantasm + allegoric) changes of a modern city. Benjamin is helpful at this point. He says, "[A]n appreciation of the transience of things, and the concern to rescue them for eternity, is one of the strongest impulses in allegory" (Benjamin 1996: 223). Any attempt to stabilize meaning and to achieve a homogenous understanding are doomed to failure in the age of modernity. Modernity promotes allegorical thinking. Allegory is an opaque concept. In the OED, it literally means "speaking otherwise than one seems to speak". Saying one thing and meaning the other, allegory "destroys the normal expectation we have about language, that our words 'mean what they say'" (Fletcher 1964: 2). Modernity challenges the limits of reading of modern Shanghai. This is the fascination of its cityscape. Nevertheless, such fascinating developments are destroyed by shaping them in a single path. Shanghai is getting more homogeneous; reading it becomes easy, but boring. With an increasing number of ordinary *longtang* being torn down, more and more "landmark" architecture – which can be placed anywhere – is erected in Shanghai. Shanghai, like Wang in 1940s, discards the *longtang*, and is becoming a "generic city" (Koolhaas 2005). Shanghai is an economically booming city; however such a "Wall Street of the Orient" is culturally and socially deficient. Progress becomes an irresistible force. Ordinary stories happening in each ordinary household in the *longtang* disappear under the grand narratives of capitalist modernity.

Haussmann's (1809-91) boulevard (a single spectacular passage, and an effective means to a planned destination) made Paris a modern city, "the capital of the nineteenth century", and, at the same time, made revolutionary barricades impossible. Paris developed economically, but, at the same time, was politically reactionary during the period of Haussmann's structural re-design. Boulevards served capitalist development and patriarchal control nicely. Shanghai in the 1940s, the "Paris of the Orient", follows the forced route of capitalist modernisation. Every Shanghai girl becomes the same Wang Qiyao. There is only one Wang Qiyao walking in the crowded boulevard. The cultural violence of progress is hidden behind the phantasmagoric spectacle. While destruction and construction seems to be normal, the economic development of a city is common sensically good for everyone. When something becomes commonsensical, it requires no explanation.

This commonsense is implanted in the built form of the city through its monuments and its landmark architecture. What is violent becomes "natural and *goes without saying*" (Barthes 1999: 143). While the city becomes simplified, "Better City, Better Life" becomes a slogan without explanation and directly understood in the economic sense. The modern conditions of Shanghai is destined to be simplified, and in the Benjaminian sense, exist in only ruins (not because it is not well developed, rather it is too developed in such a way that other aspects of life are destroyed). Sadly, Wang thinks that she is unique, can have freedom to choose her ways of living, and change her fate through a beauty contest. In the end, the heterogeneous ordinary life described in the novel and which serves as the backdrop of her and others' glamorous lives, is abandoned.

II Longtang Life

Longtang as Ordinary Walking Poems

> Shanghai's *longtang* come in many different forms, each with colors and sounds of its own. Unable to decide on any one appearance, they remain fickle ... (Wang 2008: 4).

When phantasmagoric modern life is ruinous, the *longtang*, which serve as the backdrop to Shanghai, also exist in fragments; but they do not serve as parts subsumed to the "whole", the "Paris of the Orient". In the *longtang*, ordinary life, in the eye of Wang Qiyao, is mundane, unchanging, and cannot keep up with the pace of modernity. However, each family in the *longtang* has its unique ordinary story, "accumulated over time" (Wang 2008:7). Walking in the *longtang* is like reading different unique stories hidden behind each household door. Each "turn of a street opens onto a striking view of an entire panorama" (Demetz 1986: xviii). Each ordinary story is heterogeneous, and cannot be reduced to one. Each Wang Qiyao in the *longtang* should be different. Walking in the *longtang*, to borrow from Barthes, places us in "the situation of the reader of the 100,000 million poems of Queneau, where one can find a different poem by changing a single line …" (Barthes 1997: 170). "… [The city] is not … a poem tidily centered on a subject. It is a poem which unfolds the signifier and it is this unfolding that ultimately the semiology of the city should try to grasp and make sing." (Barthes 1997: 170-172) Each alley (not boulevard) which composes the *longtang* is a fragment, and, at the same time, a separate poem. If, for Paul Muldon, a poem is a "turn in the road" ("the way the poem twists and turns will suggest a very winding path" (Tambling 2007: 2)), the opposite is also true. At each turn of an alley, one never knows what happens; a new world is exposed. In OED, the word "alley" in French, *alee*, or *allée*, means "the act of walking, passage", or "a walk or passage". The word "boulevard", originates from German *bollwerk* means "bulwark". It obstructs idle walking. Numerous twists and turns in the *longtang* simply annoy a modern subject which sees walking only as a means. Walking aimlessly in a mo-

dern city hinters progressive development, and may endanger law and order; hence, loitering is illegal. When walking purposefully, a walker is blind to the abundant signs passing him/her because the only focus is on the planned destination. A modern person is not interested in reading the signs closely, waiting for the signifier to unfold, let alone respecting each story behind the household doors. It is not surprising to see that China as a nation catching up with the speed of modernity destroys the *hutong* in Beijing and the *longtang* in Shanghai. The *longtang* are like labyrinths consisting of multiple passages with numerous connections (Shapiro 2003: 70). An unequivocal reading is impossible. Shanghai's *longtang* are now replaced by the boulevards. Walking in the boulevard destroys all the passages (except the one heading for homogeneous progress driven by capitalist and patriarchal ideology) and connections with the rest of the city. There is only one dominant way of reading the city.

Longtang as Labyrinths

> Places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state … [T]he well-being under-expressed in the language it appears in like a fleeting glimmer is a spatial practice. (De Certeau 1988: 108)

Meanings are folded in the twists and turns of the *longtang* waiting for the walker/reader to decipher them during the process of "spatial practice". If such practice is done in a utilitarian way, the depth of meaning in ordinary life refuses to unfold itself. Then the city, to people who can only think in such a way, is as elusive as Walter Benjamin's writings (which are concerned with "the 'thingness' of the cities, the only places of historical experience" (Demetz 1986: xvii)). Benjamin is particularly interested in the small things which are miniaturizations of reality (Sontag 1996: 123). (Such trivial and ordinary items are ignored/repressed/destroyed by the speed of modernity.) He thinks that "'the writer must stop and restart with every new sentence" (Benjamin 1996: 29). Each of his writing consists of a series of independent passages. Instead of leading to a fuller and comprehensive understanding of his thought, each passage is a labyrinth. 'Walking' from one passage to another is getting from one labyrinth to another one. Reading his passages is like walking in the *longtang* consisting of numerous disconnected "alleys" with "forty-nine levels of meaning" (Sontag 1996: 122). Benjamin, as an essayist, "unlike the systematic writer, might enter into the subject almost everywhere, for there are many entrances; what becomes important are the passages that he marks out, the structure that emerges" (Shapiro 2003: 66). Such walking/reading is a "pattern of advance and retreat, of circling round, is repeated on a larger scale in the unfolding or unrolling of the essay [and the *longtang*] itself" (Shapiro 2003: 67). Then, reading/walking in the passages, there is a feeling of the "uncanny in being at once familiar and unfamiliar." (Shapiro 2003: 62) Seen in this light, "[e]verything [ordinary] is – at the least – difficult." (Sontag

1996: 123) It is difficult because nothing in the modern world is definite; understanding should be plural. Things can go in this way and that way at the same time. Connections between passages are not definite but always provisional.

Walking the *longtang* and Benjamin's writings can both be regarded as loitering – an activity which:

> tends to blur distinctions on which social order depends – between innocence and guilt, between the good citizen enjoying a moment's respite and the seedy character who may just be taking the sun on this bench or idling in that shady doorway …The trivial is a category that breaks down social distinctions and hierarchies of all kinds. (Chambers 1999: 8)

"Ambiguity displaces authenticity in all things." (Benjamin, "One Way Street"; quoted in Sontag 1996: 123) Allegorical readings, guided by loitering, help us to appreciate the beauty of the labyrinthine passages in texts and the *longtang* which can never be expressed fully, and can only be revealed in "a fleeting glimmer". To appreciate, rather than to understand the *longtang*, we need to walk, as Barthes does in Japan:

> you must orient yourself in [this city] not by book, by address, but by walking, by sight, by habit, by experience; here every discovery is intense and fragile, it can be repeated or recovered only by memory of the trace it has left in you: to visit a place for the first time is thereby to begin to write it: the address not being written, it must establish its own writing. (Barthes 1983: 36)

Walking in the alleys, one's feet touch the ground. Through touching, traces are left on the touching surfaces like "the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel." (Benjamin 1992: 91) Traces are traces of the past. They constitute memory, and add material and historical thickness to the *longtang*. Then, touching gives a unique and personal attachment to the *longtang*. Through walking, memory (especially the *involuntaire*) is triggered off. This is an irreplaceable experience. Everyone has his/her own personal map constructed by walking (a touching and moving experience in both the physical and psychological senses). This makes concentration, and rational thinking, impossible. A subject is simply wandering in the street and in thought (Benjamin 2008: 40). Then, interestingly, a map is not drawn by concentration, but by distraction. Hence, the strength of walking; such "spatial practice", does not lie in its "competence", but in "improvisation". As Benjamin says, "[a]ll the decisive blows are struck left-handed. … The power of a country road is different when one is walking along it from when one is flying over it by airplane." (Benjamin 1986: 65-6) The *longtang* is a tactile space (Shapiro 2003: 67). And thus spatial practice is not about understanding a city in the sense of reducing it to a map in order to control, as with Kublai Kan in Calvino's novel, *Invisible Cites* (Calvino 1997: 135-9).

Walking in the *longtang* involves twists and turns. Each turning puts the walker into the *longtang*'s rhythm, like reading a poem. If reading/walking in it slowly, patiently, and aimlessly, meanings are unfolded accidentally, and its rhythm is enjoyed. This is the "rhythmical bliss of unrolling the thread" (Benjamin 1986:

142) in the labyrinths. Then the rhythm of the *longtang* which involves "interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy" (Lefebvre 2004: 15) is felt. "The impenetrability of the everyday and the everyday character of the impenetrable" (Benjamin 1986: 190; see also Shapiro 2003: 71-72) can be revealed. This is "a profane illumination, a materialistic, anthropological inspiration" (Benjamin 1986: 179). It is in such a way that the joy of ordinary life in the *longtang* is discovered. A structural map shows us a city in a systematic way, but cannot let us the feel the rhythm of the *longtang* which cannot be drawn onto a map. It overflows it.

Reading/walking is like dancing with signs.[4] To do so requires dwelling in it. In Barthes' words, "[T]he city speaks to its inhabitants, we speak our city, the city where we are, simply by living in it, by wandering through it, by looking at it." (Barthes 1997: 168) Reading is the same. "You did not read books through; you dwelt, abided between their lines." (Sontag 1996: 125) The *longtang* is "against interpretation" (Sontag 1996: 122) which is an attempt to control; meaning/beauty refuse to reveal to themselves. "Truth … resists being projected, by whatever means, into the realm of knowledge. Knowledge is possession." (Benjamin 1996: 29) If the *longtang* is a liberating labyrinth, to borrow from Borges (an Argentine writer who writes in the short story, "Death and the Compass": "I know of one Greek labyrinth which is a single straight line." (Borges 1970: 117)), boulevards are labyrinths which are phantasmagoric and totalitarian.

In a word, walking, as a spatial practice, is intimate to the living place, and hence, anthropological. It is literary through "writing" aesthetic value into city as allegory. It is also political by acting in opposition to the dominance of the linear conception of modern time over space. Straying in space facilitates straying in time (Demetz 1986: xviii). Benjamin says, "For autobiography has to do with time, with sequence and what makes up the continuous flow of life. Here, I am talking of a space, of moments and discontinuities." (Benjamin 1986: 28) During such spatial practice, space wins over the modern conception of time, and restores the heterogeneity of time repressed by it (Benjamin 1986: xvii); and a loiterer constitutes the modern hero. Susan Sontag puts it nicely:

> In time, one is only what one is: what one has always been. In space, one can be another person. … Time does not give one much leeway: it thrusts us forward from behind, blows us through the narrow funnel of the present to the future. But space is broad, teeming with possibilities, positions, intersections, passages, detours, U-turns, dead ends, one-way streets. (Sontag 1996: 116-7)

The Attraction of Elusive Ordinariness

> She was not merely another woman captured by his lens, for she had an added significance that eluded the grasp of his camera. Actually, Mr. Cheng didn't want to grasp anything. He felt he had lost something – something deep inside – and he needed to get it back. (Wang 2008: 80)

To the photographer Mr. Cheng Wang's ordinariness at first meant that it "was hard for him to get inspired" (Wang 2008: 80). Later, he is fascinated by the ex-

traordinariness of the ordinary. Nevertheless, the camera does not enable him to see more by 'close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus …' (Benjamin 1992: 229[5]). "Even when he was finally finished, he still felt as if there was so much more to capture on film." (Wang 2008: 80) "…[A]fter each photo he seemed to discover something new about her. With each shot there was something more to explore, and so he took shot after shot, completely enchanted by what he saw. Instead of fascinated by his camera, he 'feel[s] disappointed by [it]." (ibid. 80) "All it could capture was the 'here and now'; it was helpless when it came to capturing that 'lingering impression" (ibid. 80). Mr. Cheng does not want to see what was presented in the photo, but uses it to trace back the "lingering impression" which lies *before* the moment that the camera can capture. His conception of photography helps us to acquire the ability of "historical awakening" by reading images dialectically.

> The girl in the picture was not beautiful, but she was pretty. Beauty … implies rejection ... Prettiness … hints at a kind of intimate understanding. ... Wang Qiyao reached down into the bottom of your heart. …Yet though the image failed to linger in your mind, you were bound to remember liking it the next time you laid eyes on it. It was the kind of photo you could never get sick of, yet by no means something you could not do without. The photo and the name of the magazine were a match made in heaven, the photo acting like a footnote to the name. After all, what was *Shanghai Life* but fashion, food, and being attentive to all the details of the everyday? The image of Wang Qiyao seemed to capture the essence of all of this … (ibid. 42-3)

Wang Qiyao earns the designation, the "Proper Young Lady of Shanghai", because of her ordinary photo which she does not like, and, above all, is "a bit confused as to when exactly that photo [was] taken" (ibid. 43). This is selected as the inside front cover of a magazine called *Shanghai Life* her copy of which she hides under her pillow. The photo selected is of

> Wang Qiyao wearing one of her casual *cheongsams* with a flowered pattern. She was sitting on a stone stool beside a stone table, her face turned slightly to one side, in a "listening pose", as if chatting with someone outside the camera's frame. (ibid. 42)

It is such prettiness that Mr. Cheng is enchanted by her in a photo shoot. Her prettiness communicates with the people outside the frame in an intimate way. This is the secret of the ordinary expressed on surface. Siegfried Kracauer can help at this point. He says,

> The position that an epoch occupies in the historical process can be determined more strikingly from an analysis of its inconspicuous surface-level expressions than from that epoch's judgments about itself. Since these judgments are expressions of the tendencies of a particular era, they do not offer conclusive testimony about its overall constitution. The surface-level expressions, however, by virtue of their unconscious nature, provide unmediated access to the fundamental substance of the state of things. Conversely, knowledge of this state of things depends on the interpretation of these surface-level expressions. The fundamental substance of an epoch and its unheeded impulses illuminate each other reciprocally. (Kracauer 1995: 75)

Wang Qiyao's photo shows her as an ordinary girl in the inconspicuous setting of *longtang* life, a life overlooked and overshadowed by the grand narrative which is the "epoch's judgment", framing Shanghai as an inauthentic replica of the "Paris of the Orient". Yet this expressive detail illuminates this epochal judgment, brings it into question, undermines its definitive status as judgment, and opens up possibilities of re-reading its pasts and futures.

The *longtang* resist a single reading. "Gossip is yet another landscape in the Shanghai *longtang* – you can almost see it as it sneaks out through the rear windows and the back doors." (Wang 2008: 7) "It has nothing to do with things like 'history', not even 'unofficial history': we can only call it gossip." (ibid. 7) Shanghai's vitality is constituted by her heterogeneous gossip into which the "self" is embedded (ibid. 12). As the narrator of the novel says,

> The people in Shanghai's *longtang* neighborhoods … don't want to create a place for themselves in history: they want to create themselves. Without being ambitious, they expend every ounce of what strength they have. … Everyone has his fair share. (ibid. 13)

Nobody's account of Shanghai can claim absolute legitimacy. "In the world of rumor, fact cannot be separated from fiction; there is truth within lies, and lies within the truth." (ibid. 8) (Ruan is too insistent on separating truth from lies.) The fascination of the Shanghai *longtang*, built on gossip, is the fact that the *longtang* are made of fragments which can never succumb to a grand narrative. No single piece of gossip can substitute for the others. Each has a value of its own (Rosen 1991, 155). Viewed from the *longtang* rooftops, we can see a "majestic sight pieced together from countless minute fragments, an immense power born of immeasurable patience." (Wang 2008:8)

Such a myriad fragmented "majestic sight" is hidden behind the master-narrative of "the Paris of the Orient". This can be seen in the relationship between the *longtang* and streets and buildings (or boulevards) emerging around them.

> Streets and buildings emerge around [the *longtang*] in a series of dots and lines, like the subtle brushstrokes that bring life to the empty expanses of white paper in a traditional Chinese landscape painting. As day turns into night and the city lights up, these dots and lines begin to glimmer. However, underneath the glitter lies an immense blanket of darkness – these are the *longtang* of Shanghai. … Against this decades-old backdrop of darkness, the Paris of the Orient unfolds her splendor. (ibid. 3)

III Dreaming and Awakening in Shanghai

Wang's film audition is unsuccessful because of her ordinariness (ibid. 38). Her life, as well as the novel, do not begin with the film studio but with the *longtang*. However, the dream of becoming a celebrity and living a modern life still circulates within the traditional rooms in which Wang and every other ordinary Shanghai girl live. Being dressed in *cheongsams* of indigo blue (the colour of melancholy), "[t]he fine clothes in the store window call out to them, the famous stars on the

silver screen call out to them …" (ibid. 16) The only responses to these calls are melancholic bedroom dreams. "Their bodies may be sitting in the bedchamber, but their hearts and minds are somewhere else." (ibid. 16) The *longtang* are left desolate day and night, full of physically present but mentally absent Shanghai girls. Shanghai in the 1940s, as represented by these girls, is a city of melancholy.

The Mirror Image

Melancholy suggests that Wang, compared with a celebrity, is an incomplete/fragmented figure precisely because of her ordinariness. A by-line, a "designation", she thinks, can compose a perfect image for her, and release her from her melancholic dream. As the narrator comments, "[s]he was not a celebrity of the screen or stage, nor a wellborn woman from an influential family, nor a femme fatale capable of bringing down an empire; but if she wanted to take her place on society's stage she would need a designation." (ibid. 44-5) The designation, "A Proper Young Lady of Shanghai", is gained after her becoming an inside-front cover girl in *Shanghai Life.* It:

> told everyone in the city that … they were all on the road to glory. … The title "A Proper Young Lady of Shanghai" made one think of "the moon rising above the city on the sea" – the sea is the sea of people and the moon lighting up the night sky is everybody's moon. (ibid. 45)

The phrase "city on the sea" refers to Shanghai (the word *shang* in Chinese, means "above"; and *hai* "sea"). Like "the moon rising above the city on the sea", every Shanghai girl can become a legend of the ordinary. Nevertheless, the moon receives her glamour from the sunlight, the patriarchal light; in other words, it is only by following the instructions set by patriarchy that a girl can become Cinderella. Such an ordinary legend is possible only if she behaves or *performs* properly on the social *stage*. To sum up in a Lacanian language, Wang Qiyao, perceiving herself having a "fragmented" body, and needs an "orthopedic" designation as an "armor of an alienating identity" (Lacan 2006: 78) in order not to get drowned in the sea and become nobody.

Later, she receives an invitation from a photo salon. She "felt the intense warmth of the camera lights shining down on her body …. Surrounding her was darkness, and she was the only soul in that world of darkness." (Wang 2008: 46) She rises, as if from the (mirror) stage, under the spotlights.

> The picture of her later displayed in the window was even more glamorous because she was elegantly attired in evening dress. But this was a commonplace elegance; … this pseudo-elegance … was not meant to deceive. The splendor displayed in the shop window hinted at a dream ready to be fulfilled, a dream belonging to proper young ladies. … The Wang Qiyao displayed in the shop window had taken the "good girl" side of her … [I]t suited her taste perfectly and, moreover, provided her with confidence. (ibid. 46)

To get displayed in the window, or on the stage, is to construct a desire in the mirror for the other girls to crave. The joke is that every girl wants to be different by

acting like the other (Baudrillard 2001: 15). This kind of elegance is a vulgar and fake one. Wang identifies herself with the mirror image, "Miss Shanghai", or the "Proper Young Lady of Shanghai", with which every Shanghainese girl wants to identify herself.

She and other girls often listen to Zhou Xuan's "Song of the Four Seasons" in her bedchamber. The song "[counts] out all the beauties between spring and winter to poison and bewitch your mind – because only the nice things are mentioned." (ibid. 17) She only appropriates this song in order to fall into a dream of vanity. Each generation of Shanghai girls repeats the same dream. It is:

> a never-ending cycle, one generation after another. The vestal bedchamber is but a mirage thrown up by the Shanghai *longtang*. When the clouds open to reveal the rising sun, it turns to smoke and mist. The curtain rises and falls, one act follows another, into eternity. (ibid. 17-8)

The identity of the "Proper Young Lady of Shanghai" is however defined only by a patriarchy that lies in "the great sky beyond the stars", and sets the fate of Wang and all the other *longtang* daughters:

> Win or lose, she seemed to be in control of her own destiny – but not entirely. That belongs to the great sky beyond the stars, looming over the Shanghai nightline and enveloping the entire city. … [T]his corner of the sky is obscured by buildings and city lights, which serve as its camouflage, yet it withstands thunder and lightning and all the chaos of the world, eternally and boundlessly stretched out overhead. (ibid. 55)

Wang Qiyao is taught to behave as the "Proper Young Lady of Shanghai", and to be blind to other factors which constitute her prettiness (they are recognized by Mr. Cheng instead). The mistake she commits is her inability to see the fact that she is not free to see what she wants to see, and to choose an identity she wants to. In other words, she is defined by what she is not. She misrecognizes the Lacanian mirror as a transparent mirror, and the social stage as a life-transforming one. She is alienated by the mirror image, and enjoys being trapped in it. She does not realize that the designation is an imprisonment (instead of an "armour" which composes a perfect identity for her). Therefore, she does not take heed of the director's advice that: "[T]he 'Miss Shanghai' crown is but a floating cloud. … [T]here is nothing emptier than that – *that* is what you'd call vanity …" (ibid. 68) She, as the narrator describes, is a sparrow who cannot fly high to see the invisible power of the dominant ideology, let alone challenge it. She is "without wisdom, the most vulgar of [birds]" (ibid. 20).

The Miss Shanghai Beauty Competition reflects the power of ideology in a more profound way than a political election; or a beauty election is more political than a political election.

> "Shanghai" was already a virtual synonym for modernity, but "Miss Shanghai" captured even better the modern cosmopolitanism of the city …People paid more attention to the election of their beauty queen than the election of their mayor … (ibid. 55)

The dominant ideology governing *Shanghai modern* in the 1940s is, to follow

Lefebvre, concretely manifested in the Miss Shanghai Beauty Competition. The more the girls think themselves as being free to change their fate through such competitions, the more powerfully the ideology remains in place.

> At least half of the splendor of Shanghai was built on [Shanghai girls'] desire for fame and wealth; if not for this desire, more than half the stores in the city would have long gone under. … The city is like one big goddess, wearing clothes plumed with rainbows, scattering silver and gold across the sky. The colored clouds are the sleeves of her gown. (ibid. 60-1)

Historical Awakening

> Every epoch not only dreams the next, but while dreaming impels it towards wakefulness. (Benjamin 1997: 176)

When Shanghai constructs Wang Qiyao, the former is constructed in a similar way. The city also needs the designation, the "Paris of the Orient". In his writings on 19th century Paris Benjamin comments on the World Exhibitions that they were "places of pilgrimage to the fetish commodity." (Benjamin 1997: 165) When the 1967 World Exhibition was held in Paris, for Benjamin it "was confirmed in its position as the capital of luxury and of fashion." (Benjamin 1997: 166) This was not a compliment; the last sentence of his essay, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century" reads: "With the upheaval of the market economy, we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled." (Benjamin 1997: 176) In this sense, driven by the commodifications of capitalist modernity, Paris succumbed to the fetishism and alienation of the Lacanian mirror:

> The world exhibitions glorified the exchange value of commodities. They created a framework in which their use-value receded into the background. They opened up a phantasmagoria into which people entered in order to be distracted. The entertainment industry made that easier for them by lifting them to the level of the commodity. They yielded to its manipulations while enjoying their alienation from themselves and from others. (Benjamin 1997: 165)

How might Wang's own dreaming impel her epoch "towards wakefulness"?

When she was a young girl who could not "yet completely distinguish truth from fiction and the real from the make-believe" (Wang 2008: 34), she thinks that the camera can return the dead to life, and has "the power to make what was dark and dismal glimmer with light." To her, "inside the camera was a different world." (ibid. 34) It is like a kaleidoscope. The image, a cultural commodity, to her, is like a dream image. She is "intoxicated" (Shapiro 2003) by the camera image. She thinks that the film teaches her the essence of life in the 1940s (Wang 2008: 34).

Although she cannot be a film star, she treats the whole city as a studio, a "site of intoxication" (Shapiro 2003: 59), and as a stage for her to perform "when movies had already become an important part of her everyday life" (Wang 2008; 34) "Strings of celebratory firecrackers continued to sound as the neon light reflected in the window turned from red to orange and from green to blue. How raucous and colorful were those Shanghai nights." (ibid. 69) This is the phantasmagoric

Shanghai to which she is tragically attracted. The film studio, to her, is the microcosm of Shanghai; and Shanghai is like a "cinematic city" (Clarke 1997) saturated with moving/phantasmagoric images. Wang dreams her celebrity dreams in the phantasmagoric world. Glamour, reflected in a kaleidoscopic Shanghai made of fragmented mirrors, distracts Wang from seeing its ruinous nature.

Wang realizes her tragedy when she is killed. The city to her is still like a large film studio even on the verge of her death; however, her final interpretation is different. She realizes that everything is imprisoned on the silkscreen, or in the phantasmagoric mirror. When she realizes that the mirror is broken, and after waking up from her long dream, instead of seeing light she finally sees darkness. Instead of seeing life, she finally sees her living death happening at the very beginning, not the end, of the novel.

"[T]he hanging lamp swinging back and forth" (ibid. 429): the last image caught in Wang Qiyao's eyes before her death. This image conjures up the image of a dying woman she saw in a film studio forty years ago. Instead of simply what the image "is", the image also shows what it originally "was", and what it is "not". The film-like image is ambiguous. On this, Benjamin writes, "Ambiguity is the pictorial image of dialectics, the law of dialectics seen at a standstill." (Benjamin 1999: 171) Such filmic/dream-like images are dialectical. It is both the murdered actress and Wang, life and death, inanimate and animate, ordinary and extraordinary, past and present, use value and exchange value, totality and fragment, dream and reality, waking and dreaming, alienation and liberation, as well as politics and beauty.

> It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. (Benjamin 2002: 463)

On the contrary, the intoxication of the phantasmagoric image represses this dialectical possibility. "An image then does not make things appear 'as they really are'. It is exactly appearance, constructed inevitably by ideology and desire, that needs to be questioned." (Abbas 1989: 54) Reading the image dialectically gains access to "the unconscious of modernity" (Abbas 1989: 54), and provides "unmediated access to the fundamental substance of the state of things". No wonder the image Wang first saw in the film studio gave her a "powerful sense of déjà vu" (Wang 2008: 31). The image she first saw put her in a waking dream, a dream in real life; the very same image she sees at the last "impels her towards wakefulness" dialectically and critically: the woman she first saw in the film studio is her. Her dream ends; her life ends too. "With the upheaval of the market economy, we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled." (176)

Towards Modernity

> The realization of dream elements in waking is the textbook example of dialectical thinking. For this reason dialectical thinking is the organ of historical awakening. (Benjamin 2002: 464)

Is Shanghai modern enough? The fascination of modern city life is its unpredictability. In his reading of Marx, Marshall Berman writes:

> Modern men and women must learn to yearn for change … They must learn not to long nostalgically for the "fixed, fast-frozen relationships" of the real or fantasized past, but to delight in mobility, to thrive on renewal, to look forward to future developments in their conditions of life and their relations with their fellow men. (Berman 1988: 95-6)

For Berman, Marx appreciates the bourgeois achievement of "[liberating] the human capacity and drive for development: for permanent change, for perpetual upheaval and renewal in every mode of personal and social life." (Berman 1988: 94) However, for Marx, "the bourgeoisie is forced to close itself off from its richest possibilities" and "the only activity that really means anything to its members is making money …"(Berman 1988: 93) The Crystal Palace, as the venue for London World Exhibition in 1851, manifests "modernization as a human adventure." (Berman 1988: 245) Shanghai's World Expo is not modern in the Marxist sense; it is closed off from change and focused on making money. The sense of perpetual overcoming, the spirit of modernity, is lacking. In re-animating *Shanghai modern* as a narrative resource for its break-neck development, Abbas' "back to the future", has the city become trapped in its past, or rather, in its inability to re-read its past in a critical and dialectical way?

IV The Myth of the Ordinary

When she was young in the 1940s, Wang sacrifices Mr. Cheng's ordinary love for a modern social life. To Wang Qiyao, Mr. Cheng's *longtang* life does not change with the change of regime from the 1940s to the 1960s (Wang 2008: 233). She has a nostalgic illusion that there is always an unchanging home waiting for her. To her surprise, Mr. Cheng finally leaves her. When both the ordinary (home) and the modern party life in the 40s are gone, Wang feels the Saturnic nature of time in the 1960s. The concept of the unchanging *longtang* is only a mythical veil covering that mis-understood past which Wang has foregone. Ironically, ordinary things now turn out to be mythical. Wang Anyi writes:

> This city drains away how many experiences and changes. Although they cannot be included in history books, and remain idle talk in the streets and lanes, if we miss these, something cannot be well explained. … This is what the historical myth of Shanghai means. In fact, every day is an ordinary day. … Looking back, it becomes mythical. (Wang 2002: 203; translation is mine)

Wang Anyi may echo what Apparadurai in saying that "locality is materially produced"; otherwise, a sense of rootlessness is the result. To her, Shanghai is ordi-

narily concrete to an extent that it is sometimes merely a kind of face, an accent, a scent. For instance, there is a kind of face which can bring back her memory of a particular street. To her, "Shanghai" no longer exists in contemporary Shanghai. Different kinds of facial expression can no longer be found in its streets. They become homogeneous, and cannot trigger off her senses. She can only look for Shanghai in concepts. Interestingly, when she was in Hong Kong in the 1980s, looking at the harbor, she was thinking of Shanghai (the city on the sea), and thinks back to the book she once read, an account of the Shanghai-myth. At this moment, an illusionary but spectacular image pops up in her mind: Shanghai is rising from the sea gradually. Attempting to read closer, the vision is blurred (Wang 2002: 6-21). The ordinary eludes our grasp as it becomes myth; the city is then given over to melancholy.

The original *longtang* are disappearing while Wang Qiyao is searching for her celebrity life (Abbas 1997). She then comes to miss the *longtang* life but what remains is only her nostalgic imagination of the absent life she failed to recognize at the time. How might she come to recognize the myth of an (absent) origin and set herself free from nostalgia? We might glimpse some clues through the film *I Wish I Knew*.

Both the English and Chinese titles – *Hai Shang Chuan Qi*, literarily means "the legend (*chuan qi*) above (*shang*) the sea (*hai*)" – resonate with *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow.* In both, successive generations miss the chance of understanding Shanghai in frantic search for a modern Shanghai. *I wish I Knew* evokes the "old, ordinary Shanghai": but its narration gradually uncovers its mythological construction. The mythical origin is empty, an artificial creation.

The film consists of a series of interviews about Shanghai. Most of the interviewees are descendants of legendary figures such as Barbara Fei (Fei Mu's daughter), Du Mei Ru (Du Yuesheng's daughter), and so on. The interviews concern the interpretations of these legendary figures of Old Shanghai.[6] Rebecca Pan's interview is incomplete because she can't help crying when narrating the past, and the interview cannot continue. Her recollections seems to be very realistic; however, Pan left Shanghai for Hong Kong at a young age soon after the war. The Shanghai she interprets may be only the product of her imagination. The song heard near the end of the interview further lends it a mythical character. The ancestors of the interviewees are not politicians, lawyers, or other respectable professions but the mythical figures of gangsters, filmmakers, singers and so on not officially endorsed by official histories. Their accounts of Shanghai have a mythical colour; but we only have these accounts through their descendants' own interpretations. None of the interviews are complete, each begins and ends suddenly. The links between the interviews seems as random as the *longtang*. The film is a fragmented collection of interviews, leaving gaps which can only be filled by the imagination. The Old Shanghai is always under construction.

Interestingly enough, such interviews are linked by a fictive story in which the only character in the film, Zhao Tao, is in search of her love in Shanghai. The "realistic" elements in the interviews are connected by the "fictive" story, yet we do not know if her search succeeds. It exists in fragments too. A real artist, Zhao Tao, acts as a fictive character with her real name. Or, the artist actually acts herself. Or, the fictive character recalls her lost experience (then the character acts the artist). Or, the real artist romanticizes her "real" experience in order to act the fictive character (the artist acts herself through the fictive character). The interaction between the fictive character and the real artist never ends. It is difficult to distinguish the Zhao Tao as a film artist, or the Zhao Tao as a fictive character. It is also impossible to know if such fictive love is more real than the love expressed in the interviews.

In the film, a myth "exists" not because it is not true but because it blurs the distinction between truth and falsity, between past and future. The future is burdened with the past; and the past is a myth awaiting construction. "I wish I knew" what Shanghai was, is, and will be is an impossible wish. It brings an "everlasting sorrow" to Wang Qiyao and Ruan Lingyu because they cannot understand that the myth is constructed; they want to become mythical. Recognizing it precisely as myth allows us to step beyond this reactionary, nostalgic reading of the past.

A Wang Qiyao to Come

"The Paris of the Orient" may be the title of a novel of Shanghai for the rich and the powerful who can only expect the phantasmagoric extraordinary. Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* is a novel of the voyage of Wang Qiyao in Shanghai, the legend of the sea, from the 1940s to the 1980s. It is about how Wang and Shanghai survive. Mr Cheng's photography series of Wang Qiyao attempts to identify a "lingering impression", a moment in the past whose meaning eluded both him and her at the time. The Wang he desires always eludes his camera. The Wangs captured on the photographs always disappoint him. Mr. Cheng's "book" on Wang is an unfinished book, a series of photographs showing that "there was something more to explore" (Wang 2008: 80). His never-ending work is patiently in search of extraordinary ordinariness. It pushes him to take more pictures, and drives him away from melancholy.

Mr. Cheng's "tale" of Wang is a "writing" of that which the novel cannot reach. It seems to serve no purpose, never managing to grasp anything; it seeks only that "lingering impression" which eludes it and spurs him on. It points to an ordinary moment which was not recognized for what it was at the time. Rather than a complete myth of the past "[I]t presents a trace, a displacement of experience" (Abbas 1989: 54). Mr. Cheng's photo-taking opens up a space for a different encounter with the past.

In *Center Stage*, there are some remade scenes from Ruan's films (copies of some of them no longer exist). "These scenes … filmed in color are then juxta-

posed with the performances by Ruan preserved in black and white prints." (Abbas 1997: 47) Abbas says,

> … *Ruan Lingyu is her acting.* It is not a question, therefore, of looking for a person behind the acting or conversely of identifying the person with the dramatic roles: these are merely the most pathetic of fallacies, responsible for creating legend and gossip, turning an actress into a ghost. Rather, it is a way of representing the ghost as an actress. (Abbas 1997: 47)

Center Stage does not offer a better understanding of Ruan. On stage, only the ghost can be seen. It is impossible, in the film, to "see" Ruan, her ghost, the film industry in Shanghai in the 1930s, and Shanghai. Instead of reading the film as the biography of Ruan, it is more about "the investigation of a legend" (Abbas 1997: 45), or the impossibility of understanding any legend. The validity of what has been captured in the film is constantly challenged. The director who is supposed to be outside the film is seen and heard as a character in *Center Stage* questioning who Ruan was. Maggie Cheung, the actress playing Ruan, appears as both herself, Ruan, and Ruan in her films. She is as complicated as Zhao Tao in *I Wish I Knew.* If the film is "a quasi-documentary" of Ruan, at the same time it contains a "fictional film narrative." (Abbas 1997: 46) The investigation of Ruan's legend is similar to Jia's investigation of Shanghai's legends. What appears center stage is a legend with a ghostly appearance.

The past does not exist in nostalgia, but in "unbridled imagination" (Wang 2008: 12). The fascination of Shanghai is not due to the fact that her future is not known but to the fact that her past can never be approached. Shanghai's futures depend upon an affirmative reading of the past Shanghai, instead of a nostalgic reading which closes off "unbridled imagination".

Mr. Cheng understands Benjamin's warning: "[f]or every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably." (Benjamin 1992: 247) He devotes his life to approach in photography the last moment of Wang's ordinariness when he understands that this Wang is soon to disappear. He appreciates the transience of the ordinary Wang, and tries to rescue it for eternity; what is captured can only allegorically point to a misrecognised, unredeemed past. This does not put him in a melancholic position. Each picture gives him a "lingering impression" of the ordinary Wang. This gives him "unbridled imagination", and drives him to take more pictures. To him, photographing Wang helps him re-read the missing past. The "dialectical image" gives him unlimited possibilities of re-reading the past, and leads to unlimited futures. When Wang becomes the "Proper Lady of Shanghai", the ordinary Wang "dies". After seeing each photo he took with the past ordinary Wang, he still "discovers something new about her." (Wang 2008: 80) However, he can no longer take pictures of her. The ordinary Wang dies and he gives up his book. His subsequent reaction to Wang's pictures thus recalls Barthes' reaction to those of his youthful mother in *Camera Lucida* (Barthes 1993) – they are photographs "without future". Has Shanghai now misrecognised its past so completely for it to

disappear completely? Has its reworking of the nostalgic myth of Old Shanghai erased the redemptive possibilities of its "lingering impressions"? Or do other pasts now have to come into play if the ersatz modernity of contemporary Shanghai – this modernity as ruin – is not to be closed off but redeem modernity's promise of the "unbridled imagination"?

Ian Ho-yin Fong works as Instructor for the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies, the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is currently working on a research project about walking in the modern Chinese cities. His research interests lie in city, literary and film studies, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, Nietzsche studies, and gender studies. E-mail: fonghoyinian@gmail.com

Notes

1 Page references to this novel are put in the main text. The title of the original Chinese version does not carry a subtitle.

2 Wang Anyi (2002) says, "To write Shanghai, the best representative is woman." (89) The English translation is mine.

3 On the importance of re-reading, Roland Barthes (1974) says, "… [T]hose who fail to reread are obliged to read the same story everywhere …" (16); see also Italo Calvino (1999).

4 Nietzsche says, "For one cannot subtract dancing in every form from a noble education – to be able to dance with one's feet, with concepts, with words: need I still add that one must be able to do it with the pen too – that one must learn to *write*?" See Friedrich Nietzsche 1976: 512-3.

5 It is important to note that he discusses film, instead of photography.

6 Montaigne says, "We need to interpret interpretations more than to interpret things." Quoted in Derrida 1978: 278.

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