Abstract
This article examines the urban management experience of the city of Shanghai since the economic opening of People’s Republic of China in 1978. The urban policies developed in this context can be considered as a set of tools that the Chinese Communist Party applies to the country’s urbanization project, to spread the recent Chinese hyper-urbanization phenomenon. This paper addresses this process of forming a new Asian urban model through the production and sale of spectacular images inside the logic of city marketing, understood through processes such as the xintiandization of many neighborhoods in Shanghai and in other Chinese cities, as well as the construction and urban planning of the Pudong area with the goal to sell the idea of modernization in China.

Keywords
XANGAI, UMA INFLEXÃO NO FAZER URBANO CHINÊS

RESUMO
Este artigo trata da experiência de gestão urbana da cidade de Xangai desde a abertura econômica da República Popular da China, em 1978. As políticas urbanas desenvolvidas nesse contexto podem ser consideradas como um conjunto de métodos utilizados para difundir o recente fenômeno da hiperurbanização na China continental. Abordaremos este processo de formação de um novo modelo urbano asiático a partir da produção e venda de imagens espetaculares dentro da lógica do city marketing, compreendida através de processos como o da xintiandização em diversos bairros em Xangai e em muitas outras cidades chinesas e da construção e venda do ideal de modernidade chinês através das ações e projetos urbanos na região do Pudong.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE
Introduction

The interest of this article lies in understanding the changes occurred in the city of Shanghai since the economic opening promoted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and in the relations that we can establish between the experiences of city marketing\(^1\) integrated to the sale of culture as a vector to leverage the recent Chinese hyper-urbanization, responsible for maintaining the world economy since the 2008 crisis (Harvey, 2011). The “revitalization” of the old historical district of Xintiandi, in Shanghai, pioneered this process and opened up the way to several projects full of references to the traditional buildings with stone portals ($shíkùmen$), among other compositional pastiche buildings. In Pudong (east bank of Huangpu River), there is the Lujiazui Business District, with its spectacular high-tech appearance that seems opposite to the historicist pastiche of Xintiandi district, although both are the face of the same coin in the current process of contemporary urban spectacularization we now see in China.

The article follows the understanding that Shanghai is the Chinese city that better brings together the characteristics of the contemporary Chinese urbanization. This set of characteristics is called “Shanghai Model” in this article, an urban model under development in the 21st century. The “Shanghai Model” gathers parameters of urbanization used in major urbanization projects in the entire continental China. Those parameters are composed of extreme urban renovations, sale of the idea of modernity nationally and internationally, integration between international capital and government-owned capital, and articulation between the urban model and the economic model resulting from the Chinese market socialism\(^2\).

We understand that the study of the background of this new urban and economic model under construction in China will bring out possible tensions in the field of architecture and urbanism, and will indicate possible ways to the Urbanism (at the end of the line?) and of which remained from the Architecture in the midst of the capitalism in its phase of informational globalization and dissolution of local, regional and cultural frontiers. The analysis of the cases of the Shanghai districts of Xintiandi (in Puxi) and Lujiazui (in Pudong) is paradigmatic to understand the reinvention of the strategic planning in the Chinese urban context. This urban and economic model shows the adaptation capacity of capital strategies even in a market socialist political and economic system resulting from the hybridization between the socialism and the Integrated Worldwide Capitalism.

Shanghai, an inflection in the Chinese urban making

The city of Shanghai is located in the river mouth of Yangtze River, one of the main Chinese rivers, which crosses the country from east to west, passing through regions of major economic importance for the transportation and flow of goods. As the result of the governmental incentive, the study of the Shanghai city urbanization process became fundamental to understand the urbanization parameters of the “Shanghai Model”, used as the driving force of...
Shanghai is the big laboratory of urban experimentations in continental China, the renovations and image-making in the Commercial and Business Districts (CBDs) were the first tested in Shanghai, and then in Beijing, which is a much more controlled and museumificated city than Shanghai. Then, in addition to Beijing, other Chinese cities followed Shanghai model since the Lujiazui Business District was built, according to Shepard (2015), Beijing and Guangzhou were the first to disclose plans following the guidelines put into practice in Shanghai, but many others started to emulate Pudong model, starting the epidemics of city construction, all of them with at least one CBD in their plans, of which many of them didn’t even have demand (nor people) to keep them.

With the victory of the Chinese Communist Party over the nationalists of the Kuomintang in the 1949 civil war, there was an inflection in the urban development of Shanghai city. The hegemony of the capitalism rule was fundamentally inverted by the Communist revolution, inaugurating the socialist phase of the city that then started to be directly controlled by the CCP central committee in Beijing, losing its status of “special administrative city”. In that phase, the city starts to decline, because the foreign capital was completely blocked and nationalized, reorganizing the economic, political and social dynamics of the city.

Upon the death of leader Mao Tsé-Tung, the city of Shanghai, which before did not receive government investments, resumed its connection with the international market and the foreign capital, after the policy of reformation and opening (gaige kaifang) adopted by the Chinese government and headed by Deng Xiaoping in December 1978, which ensured to the local government of Shanghai more autonomy in relation to the central government (FU, 2002, p. 113). Thereby, the transnational capital assumed again a leading role in the city, although it has only created perceptible effects nearly a decade later, with the acceleration of changes occurred through the injection of state capital in the launching of the major project for Pudong region in the 1990s, at least 70 years after the speculation on the area since the Sun Yat-sen, Republic of China’s leader, scheme between 1918 and 1924, which foresaw the installation of the Great Port of Pudong, a plan of 1919. Therefore, the current skyline of Shanghai directly results from state investments as key-piece to understand the image-making process3 around Pudong nowadays.

The reformation and opening policy by Deng Xiaoping for the People’s Republic of China was consolidated through the new Constitution of 1982, which underwent alterations and was detailed through a series of regulations by the State Council since 1988. In that period, all the urban land was declared as State property, while the rural land was instituted as the property of the collectives, according to the same constitution. However, with the economic opening, the right to use a piece of urban land could be transferred4, through the local government, for the use by the transferee or the continental China modernization. Shanghai case became paradigmatic to understand the Chinese hyper-urbanization, because it gathers the characteristics of the first Special Economic Zones (SEZ) of the country’s southern region (Pearl River Delta) associated to the extreme urban renovations and the strategic embellishment and museumification of the “historical” downtown, identified by the CCP as an urban model desirable for the rest of the country.

It was not by chance that Shanghai was chosen by the CCP as the laboratory for the creation of the urban model to be followed by the rest of China. In the 19th century, the city was identified as a cosmopolitan hub, having the busiest port in the country. In several moments of history, Shanghai city was considered by Chinese people from other parts of the country as “less Chinese” than the rest of the country, even before the international concessions of the 19th century, which hybridized the old Chinese port city with urban models exotic to the Chinese urban tradition.

3 Shanghai is the big laboratory of urban experimentations in continental China, the renovations and image-making in the Commercial and Business Districts (CBDs) were the first tested in Shanghai, and then in Beijing, which is a much more controlled and museumificated city than Shanghai. Then, in addition to Beijing, other Chinese cities followed Shanghai model since the Lujiazui Business District was built, according to Shepard (2015).

4 The land transference process officially requires three levels of approval by the State, but extra-officially those approvals can be granted by giving bribes (known as guanxi, a type of face-to-face negotiation), which ensures that new schools, hospitals, daycare centers and other undertakings are made on land purchased from the local government or traded in the parallel market (FRIEDMANN, 2002, p. 106).
to be leased, for a period of up to 75 years, for local developers (FRIEDMANN, 2005, p. 106).

Since the amendment approved in 1988, the government loosened even more the transference of land use right. As part of the land use right leasing contract, real estate developers that acquired the right to construct were obliged to clean the land, to make earthmoving works, and to provide appropriate infrastructure to support both state and private projects. Therefore, everybody benefitted from the leasing and transferences of the Chinese urban land use rights. The Chinese urbanization of the past 30 years is the direct result from such state initiatives that still produces effects.

Also since the 1980s, any rural areas could be annexed to the closest metropolitan center with a simple modification of the status from rural to urban. This explains why not only Pudong area, a previous rural area, could be annexed to the municipality of Shanghai, but also several other rural areas around the city, making it a big municipality. As the consequence of the easy process of annexation of rural areas to the territory of Shanghai, the municipality administers an approximate area of 6,300km² in 2018, more than four times the area of the municipality of São Paulo.

**Shanghai, the “dragon head”**

After the strategic modification of the Constitution back in 1988, which made it easier to transfer public rural land to the jurisdiction of major adjacent urban centers, the next step of the government, towards making Shanghai an urban model of the Chinese economic development, was to declare that the city would be the “dragon head”, which task was to “push China forward”, according to the words of the then CCP leader Deng Xiaoping, in a visit to Shanghai in 1990.

Pudong region was then divided into development zones, the most important (and spectacular) of them being the Lujiazui financial center, created by the Chinese to attract foreign capital, which started a series of collaborations with international consulting firms for the urban planning. Many of the major names of the worldwide architecture star system took part of the contest of what would become the “new symbol” of the “new Shanghai”, inaugurating the major and structuring renovations that would dramatically modify the image, the customs and the ways of life of the city.

Therefore, between 1988 and 1998, more than 9 million square meters of Shanghai old urban fabric were demolished, and in the next four years, nearly 50 million square meters of old districts were torn down to give place to new undertakings (Figure 1. In less than 14 years, the
The hukou is a system of people flow registration and control. Citizens are registered in the zone where they were born, and they can lose the basic rights of access to education or to health if they migrate to another zone, either rural or urban.

The group headed by Joseph Belmont was created from this agency. Belmont is one of the key figures responsible for the big Parisian projects, including the Great Arch in La Défense and the Louvre pyramid of Paris by I. M. Pei (CAMPANELLA, 2008, p. 72).

On the other hand, the country-city migration and the economic reformations of the 1980s resulted in a constant inflow of rural migrants to big Chinese cities, in the statistics known as “floating population” (liudong renkou), because, in general, they came from rural areas and villages, and did not have the hukou “urban” registration. The country-city migration became significant in Shanghai after the 1990s, when the hukou restrictions were loosened; only Shanghai received 500,000 workers from the countryside in 1984, but this figure increased to nearly 4 million immigrants in 2000 (CAMPANELLA, 2008, p. 181), equal to almost one third of the city entire population in the early 21st century.

Since when foreigners occupied European concessions in Shanghai, Chinese leaders saw the French Concession as a municipal management model to be followed, since the English-American government of the English concession was more liberal and decentralized. This old relation was then resumed with a partnership between the French public urban planning agency, the Institut d’Aménagement et d’urban de la Région Île-de-France (IAURIF), and the mayor of Shanghai city, Zhu Rongji, in 1985. Zhu’s plan was to call an international consulting firm capable of attracting the media attention to the city, formalizing the Chinese-French collaboration to provide consulting services to Lujiazui urban project in Pudong region (Figure 2). The decision of engaging a consulting firm instead of promoting an open contest was because of the preference of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to remain in total control of the development process of the projects to be carried out. Consequently, the party officials could select among several proposals instead of only committing to a single winning proposal.

Eight architects that might take part of the consulting service were introduced – Renzo Piano, Massimiliano Fuksas, Richard Rogers, Norman Foster, Toyo Ito, Kazuo Shinohara, Dominique Perrault, and Jean Nouvel – and, form this initial list, the officials selected four, Ito, Fuksas, Perrault, and Rogers, who visited Shanghai in 1992, and came back months later to submit their proposals. Meanwhile, demolition teams leveled the land and completely tore down Pudong villages (which, at the time, already had nearly 1 million residents, between immigrants and refugees), gentrifying the area for the spectacular megaproject of Lujiazui.

Figure 2: The urban model developing in Shanghai, materialized in Pudong, seen from the streets of the old town. Photo by the author (2015). Collection of the author.
Figure 3: Pearl Tower, at Century Avenue in Shanghai. Photo by the author (2015). Collection of the author.

Figure 4: Scale model of Shanghai city, which is exposed at Shanghai’s Museum of Urbanization. Focus on the Century Avenue at the top of the image. Photo by the author (2015). Collection of the author.

7 The Pearl Tower or Oriental Pearl was the highest building of China between 1994-2007 (GREENSPAN, 2014). The structure intended to be the “symbol of future”, but it is actually a big “bright obelisk”, since the technology used to transmit media is a remnant from the old Soviet system, making the tower a structure more adapted for the reality of television in the 1960s than in 1990 (CAMPANELLA, 2008, p. 75). The shape of the building is basically a tripod that supports a sphere with a spike that raise towards the sky, covered by a luminescent paraphernalia that blinks and “dances” in the rhythm of music playing in the staircase of the ticket office.

The first building to be built was a huge Radio and TV tower known as “The Pearl of the Orient” (Figure 3), designed by a team of Chinese architects and engineers from the Shanghai East China Institute of Architectural Design (CAMPANELLA, 2008, p. 73), which is still one of the most visited touristic attractions in China. The tower soon became a symbol of the city and of the Chinese urbanistic ambitions, the structure is known as the “Eiffel Tower of Shanghai”, which is evident with the miniatures and key-holders sold to tourists, as those of the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

Of all the projects elaborated to Lujiazui, none was considered the “winner”, and the party ended up selecting a “mixed” proposal encompassing the ideas that best adapted to the image they intended to sell, and ordered that the “optimized” project was developed by the team of Chinese architects from the Shanghai Urban Planning and Design Institute (CAMPANELLA, 2008, p. 79). There was no public participation in the elaboration of the project, and the residents of Pudong region were resettled in distant regions, and even in other cities, villages and smaller districts.

The French provided consulting services for the construction of Pudong’s main avenue, the Century Avenue (Figura 4), a broad boulevard starting at the Pearl Tower and ending in a large public park, the Century Park, which stays most of the time empty, and where at the entrance park visitors are reminded that local law prohibits “patients with mental or infectious disease or improperly dressed persons from entering the Park” (CAMPANELLA, 2008, p. 80). The Century Avenue was thought at the image and likeness of Paris Champs-Élysées,
and even if the French architect Jean-Marie Charpentier denies it, the design has proportions and perspectives that remind the famous French avenue, with some small “adjustments” because of the monumental scale, thought to impress from the distance, from the sky or from the top of Pudong skyscrapers (Figures 5 and 6).

The “contest” for Lujiazui project was one of the most publicized in mid 1990s, and its conception had the aim of praising the power and capacity of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in building a modern megalopolis under the “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, by still injecting state capital in its urban conformation (FU, 2002, p. 113), ensuring that the city could compete with cities such as Hong Kong, Singapore and others, not only in Asia, but in the whole world. But, then, we could here ask ourselves the same that Otília Arantes asked in her book *Chai-na*, of 2011: “what is wrong with Shanghai?” (ARANTES, 2011, p. 159). Why so many economists reported concern with its apparent economic strength? Was Shanghai’s skyline a coherent reflex of the Chinese economic and financial situation, or a mere fraud?

According to Arantes, when Shanghai becomes an SEZ, such as the cities of Pearl River Delta, and at the same time starts to consume billions of *yuans* in its expansion, especially in Pudong, all the economic growth accompanying this process would have resulted in the spoliation of the less privileged social classes.

Not only Shanghai, but all the Chinese growth and the accompanying urban modernizations would have resulted from a very special spoliation, either

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*Figure 5: View of Pudong during the night and the light show provided by the State until 11:00 pm. Photo by the author (2015). Collection of the author.*

*Figure 6: Walkway on the road ring at the Century Avenue of Shanghai Photo by the author (2015). Collection of the author.*
The analysis done by the MIT professor, Yasheng Huang, according to who the “Chinese Potemkinism” would be a set of cities and façades made to distort and idealize the reality. (Ibidem).

The manufacturing of consensus on the growth at any price is a key piece to create a situation of permanent competitive mobilization for the battle against the competing cities. Cities today are like factories of ideologies, territories, community, civism, etc. through the transference of income taken from the underprivileged social classes, or through the taxation of several types of businesses and business arrangements located in the immensity of rural China […] the later are those responsible for the 80/90s boom, and still continue to support most of those literally “invented” centers and superlatively concentrated in Shanghai (ARANTES, 2011, p. 160).

The change of the policy on rural land “sale” (a new good deal) and the possibility of annexing it to municipalities have boosted the Chinese urbanization, and especially Shanghai urbanization, which had its territory expanded, allowing new undertakings and big projects. As most of the residents of Pudong area were a floating population, with no housing registration or with rural hukou, they did not count in the statistics as “official” residents of the city, and thus even after the gentrification and construction of the TV tower, Pudong area was considered a “ghost town” (SHEPARD, 2015, p. 202) by reporters, especially the foreigners, who saw the financial hub ready to go, but “empty of people”. This social problem of the invisible floating population is even more evident when compared to the growth of the city population. In 1990, the census showed a population of 7,834,800 people, and in 1997, the official figure is 10,185, 900 people (LI; WU, 2002, p. 26).

According to Arantes, Shanghai produces little actual wealth if macro-economically analyzed, but it is a major consumption center and has several headquarters of major multinational companies making Pudong Financial Center and the High Technology Center a kind of “well engineered farces” that, “amidst so many simulacra and façades”, “deep inside it would be nothing more than a gigantic Potemkin city” – in short, just a movie set” (ARANTES, 2011, p. 162).

This is exactly the strategy of the CCP to forge a success scene and to sell the idea of “modernity”, which it intends to apply to the other Chinese cities, and especially to indicate how it will influence cities when it becomes a creditor at the international level. Furthermore, the rhetoric strategy of constructing an urban paradigm has the aim of promoting an attractive city for broad capital investments, and in general this kind of stage tends to involve urban spaces, and inevitably to affect the ways of life of their residents. In the Chinese case, the creation of consensus on Shanghai “success” has a double economic objective – to sell this consensus as the starter motor for the continuation of its project of China modernization through domestic investments in the urbanization of the country, and to become external reference capable of engendering modernizations in other beyond-frontiers contexts, attracting more foreign investments to China.

Therefore, to create a consensus on Shanghai “success” is precisely the current intention of the Chinese Communist Party, in order to keep its State capitalism through urbanization. Also according to Arantes (2011), the analysis done by the economist Yasheng Huang on Shanghai urban growth indicates that it is above all “political”. Huang also compares it to the “development” of centralized and authoritarian regimes, mostly connected to “big oversized infrastructure works, paradise of contractors, gigantism of the bureaucratic
business rings” (HUANG, 2008 apud ARANTES, 2011, p. 164). Shanghai model, from Huang’s viewpoint, is a fraud, a farce, since the “visual evidence” that tries to ensure Shanghai status as a “miracle” is pointe out by the author as the result of a “mirage” that cannot yet be economically demonstrated.

After the economic opening led by Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese growth performed by urban modernizations can be identified in Shanghai, which gathers all the characteristics found in the business arrangements in the Chinese urbanization since the territory of the city was a mostly rural area. Currently, the growth between the 1980s and the 1990s still supports most of the financial centers built in the interior of the country, made at the image and likeness of Pudong Business Center, in such a way that the bright façades of Shanghai and the cities full of useless financial centers, meaningless and empty, would therefore be the result of a simulacrum, a mere scenery provided by the CCP, and Huang also completes our affirmation: “If the Chinese economy stumbles, future historians will look back, to the stunning heights of skyscrapers in the midst of old rice paddies of Pudong, as a warning sign unnoticed by nearly everybody” (HUANG, 2008, p. 231 apud ARANTES, 2011, p. 159-160).

However, the profusion of financial centers in new cities of China’s countryside is a recent phenomenon. Until the 1990s, when the government started the serialized construction of new towns, there were no financial centers in China. (SHEPARD, 2015, p. 136). But when Shanghai started to develop the Lujiazui Business District, in Pudong, other big cities such as Beijing and Guangzhou started to follow the steps of its “success”. This development movement continued to emulate Pudong’s example and engendered an epidemics of financial centers as growth vector for small cities. This created some social and urban problems, because those small cities did not have an actual demand for financial centers, nor the capital to build them, and much less to keep them working.

A survey on the number of financial centers in China was carried out and revealed projects in progress for 36 new centers in 2003 (SHEPARD, 2015, p. 135). The competition for investments transformed the construction of financial centers into a goal for the smaller cities in China’s countryside that followed the “Shanghai Model” with the aim of becoming relevant in the national context.

Shanghai’s central business district (CBD) in Pudong sat stagnant with less than a 30 per cent occupancy rate for years after it was built, but the city’s officials didn’t worry. They knew they had their finger on a very powerful switch; when the time came they flicked it and forced state-owned banks to move their headquarters across the Huangpu River into the new skyscrapers that were awaiting them. Pudong is now one of the most vibrant and powerful CBDs on the planet and is the model for new business districts across China.” (SHEPARD, 2015, p. 77).
investment of foreign capital even more speed up the process of transformation of the city. After the consolidation of Pudong area and the construction of Lujiazui skyscrapers, it became clear the intention of the Chinese Communist Party to overcome the impact that the Bund (Figure 7) had caused in the 1930s. Therefore, the program around the construction of the first skyscraper that would accompany the TV tower (the Pearl Tower) should be typically Chinese, but the Jin Mao Tower building (Figure 8) was ironically designed by an American firm and thought to simulate the shape of a legendary Chinese pagoda, the Kaifang.

Lujiazui was responsible for promoting the city at the global level, but it is not only Pudong area that is at the leadership of the government strategies to sell the city image, the old district of Xintiandi was the main target (at the local level) of the preservationist and homogenizing logic of urban/cultural management of the city.

The biggest example of a strategic planning with focus on the sale of culture as the main vector of urban “revitalization” in Shanghai is the project for the district of Xintiandi, with the beginning of the first phase in 2001, under the name Shanghai’s Xintiandi Shopping District (CAMPANELLA, 2008, p. 275).
“XINTIANDIZE”: THE TRENDIEST VERB IN CHINESE URBANISM

In the past few decades, the verb “to xintiandize” became mandatory in any new urban project performed in continental China, be it thought to Shanghai or not. Catchword in any “revitalization” process and unavoidable guideline to any Chinese constructor or contractor that tries to replicate the “success” of Shanghai in their undertakings, either districts or new towns spread throughout continental China.

Patrimonialization, museumification, gentrification and touristification are parts of the processes of the contemporary urban spectacularization, in which “images somehow become goods” (HARVEY, 1992, p. 260). Those urban branding processes are not new in the western experience with the urban marketing strategies around culture, but, in the context of Shanghai, Xintiandi project was pioneer. Its idealizer, Vicent Lo, hired the American architect Benjamin Wood to elaborate the design that, despite supposedly preserving historical buildings, did not escape from the practice of tearing down everything, which has been done in the vernacular architecture of China.12

Wood’s design was not very different, despite convincing Vicent Lo that the shíkùmen (Figure 9) were not dirty and poor houses that hindered the future of his undertaking, he inverted the logics using them as the symbol of revitalizations, legitimating the gentrification of the area in the name of the preservation of the local “architectural culture”, resettling nearly 4 thousand people according to official figures.

The turning point in relation to several western cases is that the laws on preservation and restoration in China are not very restrictive, many temples are demolished and rebuilt from scrap instead of being restored, because the Chinese traditionally maintain the technique instead of the object itself, so that the American architect could selectively remove structures to open more space and only restore those more “iconic” (such as the building where the Chinese Communist Party was founded), responsible for attracting many tourists, especially from the countryside, turning the “new district” of Xintiandi into a truly good new deal, a gentrified and spectacular version of the district, a simulacrum of the popular urban past, replaced by shopping malls, cafés, boutiques and pubs, that gave back this old part of the town to Shanghai’s people, but specially to those who can afford it.

This type of intervention resulted in several orders to Wood to “xintiandize” other urban spaces in China. Like the Baltimore success was synthetized by the strategic planning in the business growth machine city (American growth machine),

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12 Most of the typical dwellings of Shanghai, the shíkùmen (a house with stone portal, resulting from the hybridization between western imperialist architecture and the spatial organization of narrow Chinese streets of the 19th century), which before sheltered nearly 80% of the Shanghai’s people, were almost all destroyed in the 1990s.
Figure 10: Historical buildings and pastiches artificially arranged around a square in Xintiandi, in Shanghai. Photo by the author (2015). Collection of the author.

Figure 11: View of the gentrified and spectacular version of Xintiandi district, in Shanghai. Photo by the author (2015). Collection of the author.

more than 20 Chinese cities officially invited Lo and Wood to develop similar projects, and many others, literally indiscriminately, copied the success model throughout the country.

Like a pirate DVD, the idea of Xintiandi was copied in the entire China; even the name became a general describer, like the “city fair”. Nearly every big Chinese city now has a heritage-district at the style of Xintiandi, either already working, being planned, or about to be built (CAMPANELLA, 2008, p. 279).

In the city of Nanjing, an area full of old buildings of the nationalist government phase was the target of a historicist project called “1912”, a reference to the foundation of the Republic by Sun Yat-sen, composed of several buildings built as “false historical” indistinguishable from the remaining ones, all revitalized to become cafés, shopping malls, etc. In the city of Dalian, builders erected an entirely new district and called it the historical district with the same name (Xintiandi), which has buildings artificially arranged around a square (CAMPANELLA, 2008, p. 279) (Figures 10 and 11).

Thus, both the financial district of Lujiazui and its delirious skyscrapers, and the “old” patrimonialized district of Xintiandi, are the faces of the same trade currency of the market at the new phase of the informational capitalism – the contemporary urban spectacularization – and are part of the construction and sale of the new image of Shanghai city, both being part of the simulacrum engendered for tourists and international investors attracted by the “Chinese miracle” that the scenery created around the city intends to sell.

The manipulation of the public opinion by the media (censored and regulated by the Chinese Communist Party) takes place through the soft power of advertising and media campaigns, so that the city regains the importance it had in the phase when Europeans occupied the concessions. One of the examples of the type of media that is conveyed in TV channels and exclusive channels such as the Youku (Chinese equivalent to the YouTube) is the video Shanghai, City of Inspiration, a video that is repeated in loop to the exhaustion in
According to the American model of the undertaking-city, like the renovations of Baltimore between 1960-1970 that attracted 22 million tourists per year, of which 7 million were foreigners, only comparable to Disneyland at the time (HALL, 2013, p. 415). Likewise, it is expected the launching of Shanghai Disney Resort, in the new region of Pudong, which as expected will be the biggest Disneyland in the world, in addition to the Shanghai Disney Park, an undertaking-theme park that will be approximately three times bigger than the Hong Kong’s, and will have the biggest Disney castle, with details of local architecture and hotels offering the option of delivering the purchases done in the parks directly to the hotel room. Disneyland is now also a good and lucrative new deal in China. See: https://www.shanghaidisneyresort.com/en/. Accessed on: 19 Oct 2015.

Based on the above affirmations and analyses, we see that the Chinese government makes efforts to keep Deng Xiaoping’s postulate, and to preserve the pace harmonized with the initial intention of “having a new face at each new year, and profound changes at each three”. The strategies of the Chinese state constitute an urbanization machine with high costs for life quality and environmental quality, showing a mismatch with the traditional manner of Chinese urbanization based on the feng shui and on the principles of balance and harmony.

The leasing of public land in Pudong yielded a profit of 190 million US dollars only between 1990-1995, and most of that amount was invested in infrastructure and improvements of the district to make it even more attractive to developers.

Therefore, Pudong’s development can be divided into three phases: the first (1990-1995) marked by the construction of two bridges and urban plans and projects; the second (1996-2000), by the construction of the international airport, a road ring and the subway line connecting Pudong to Puxi since 2000; and the third (2000-2030), with focus on the construction of more infrastructure and more skyscrapers, in addition to new satellite-towns ensuring the spreading and making the megalopolis-city less dense.

Shanghai’s government takes pride of having more than 4 thousand skyscrapers (twice as much as New York city) and of being the most growing city in the country. The skyscrapers of Pudong area are the symbol of the economic dynamism the country intends to the future. As Shanghai’s people use to say: “if Shanghai is conducting the Chinese economy, Pudong is conducting Shanghai”.

As a conclusion, we can say that opposite to what happens in the experience of several countries in the world with the dismantle of the State (which is losing the central control of urbanistic decisions) within the already condemned process of city marketing involved in the strategic planning actions, what we see in China is a hybrid process, which unites the State apparatus and the loosening of laws so that local Chinese governments can sell the land use right, and both can profit with the process. This hybrid process also reminds of the functioning of supposedly democratic countries that live the current process of “State of Exception”, where laws and citizens’ rights are temporarily suspended to legitimate emergency decision-making. We can here make a comparison to what happens in China, which seems to be always in the State of Exception, that is, which shows that there is no State of Exception for them, but rather an “excess of State”.

Final considerations

13 According to the American model of the undertaking-city, like the renovations of Baltimore between 1960-1970 that attracted 22 million tourists per year, of which 7 million were foreigners, only comparable to Disneyland at the time (HALL, 2013, p. 415). Likewise, it is expected the launching of Shanghai Disney Resort, in the new region of Pudong, which as expected will be the biggest Disneyland in the world, in addition to the Shanghai Disney Park, an undertaking-theme park that will be approximately three times bigger than the Hong Kong’s, and will have the biggest Disney castle, with details of local architecture and hotels offering the option of delivering the purchases done in the parks directly to the hotel room. Disneyland is now also a good and lucrative new deal in China. See: https://www.shanghaidisneyresort.com/en/. Accessed on: 19 Oct 2015.
Through the analysis of the Chinese discourse, we identify how this new urbanistic regime operates in the formation of the ‘Shanghai Model’, and can explain the Chinese hyper-urbanization inside and outside the exceptional context of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) created by Deng Xiaoping to test his accelerated urban development model. Pudong then became the prototype for the development for the rest of Shanghai city in its race to become a worldwide capital, and the Shanghai’s urbanization became an “urban model” with Chinese characteristics to guide China’s moment as the new creditor of the world geopolitics, as planned by the Chinese Communist Party since the economic opening.

“Shanghai Model” engendered by the CCP, in addition to explaining the Chinese hyper-urbanization, reveals the dangerous dependency of this process by the world economy, at least since 2008, and reveals the first Asian urban model replicated in such a scale, resulting in countless urbanistic interventions spread throughout the territory of continental China, and constituting a fundamental part of the CCP’s urbanization machine. An urban model done outside the capitalism logic, since this urban model of “success” composed of Pudong and Xintiandi district directly results from the efforts of the market socialism with Chinese characteristics.

This new urban model now gains even more power if we consider that today China emerges in the world scenario as the great political and economic power in the dispute for the new world order. CCP’s initiatives to create the city of illusions of enveloped signs have not only strictly economic reasons, but also subjective reasons, and require a comprehensive ethical-esthetical critique to tension them, since its genesis involves a new axe, in a new world order, and, who knows, a new possible world capital in this brief 21st century.

References


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