

# Shanghai Contemporary: The Politics of Built Form

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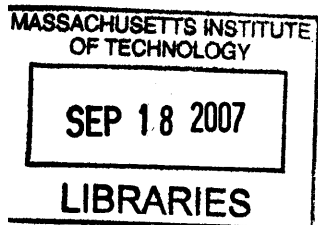
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# **Shanghai Contemporary: The Politics of Built Form**

by Non Arkaraprasertkul

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on August 10, 2007 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Architecture Studies

## **Abstract**

This thesis is an attempt to integrate research, architectural knowledge, and fieldwork to understand the phenomenon of the urban transformation in Shanghai, one of the fastest growing cities in the world. Having once been a lucrative treaty port city, Shanghai has re-embarked on the mission to become an economic global city through a combination of assimilated industrialized cityscape and the startling industriousness of Chinese pragmatism from 1980 onwards. Driven by the momentum of free-market capitalism within the politics of a state-controlled quasi-communist socialist entity, Shanghai's built form and environment have been conceived as a cultural construction of the conspicuous consumption of global financial marketing and of ostentatious expenditure of the elite. Nostalgic hearkening back to the glory days of foreign occupation does not adequately explain the phenomenon that exists today. Central to the aim of this thesis are the questions on how the global market was utilized, what internal and external forces were at play, and the importance given to the perception of values. By critically examining the history of the city's planning process and the reality of its urbanism, this thesis outlines the city's pragmatic developments dominated largely by its politics. The New Shanghai is a production of image, as it has always been the façade of China by virtue of its strategic location for international trade. The mediation between the representational built form, through politics, and the internal social transformations, by means of its soft cultural infrastructure, has created a cosmopolitanism unlike anything else in the world.

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# 当代上海:建筑意义下的权利与地位

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## 摘要:

本文尝试通过综合建筑知识,研究和实地考察,解析上海这座世界上发展最快之一城市的城市化演进现象.上海曾为一个得天独厚的繁荣殖民港口城市,如今正通过中国实用主义下对先进工业化城市景观的不断借鉴,朝着重新成为一个国际经济中心的目标大步前进。由于"准共产主义"的社会主义政治实体下的市场经济动力驱使,上海的城市形态和环境被构想成一个全球金融市场强大购买力和社会上层大量支出下的文化架构。用历史上外国势力对上海的控制来解释如今上海的发展现象是不合适的,本文讨论的核心问题是国际市场如何被加以利用,有哪些国内外势力在其中扮演重要角色,以及对于城市价值解读的重要性。通过批判性的审视历史上这个城市的演进过程和城市化现状,本文概括了这套由政治作为主导的切实可行的发展体系:凭借着其国际贸易的战略位置,新上海一如既往的扮演着窗口城市的角色,发挥着展示中国的作用。其具有政治特色的代表性建筑形式和通过文化基础实现的社会内部变革之间的相互平衡,创造了这个独具特色的国际大都会。

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*To my history teachers: Stan, John, and Bob.*

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## ***Preface***

Shanghai, China's largest city, is situated strategically on the bank of the Yangtze River Delta in the eastern coast of China. The city represents China's residual colonial past, and marks where China's modernization began. Its relatively short urban history came into life as a treaty port town in the late nineteenth century by foreign investors, and later transformed into an industrial city under communist-planned Marxist economics during the period of political uncertainty upon which the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Beginning with the Open Door Policy of 1978, Shanghai began to identify itself as the lucrative city of exorbitant growth. Today, this topographically flat city accommodates some eighteen million people within an area of two thousand square miles. Shanghai's gross domestic income is higher than that of Beijing, and its growth rate is higher than China's national average. The Pudong New Development Zone, inaugurated less than two decades ago, is now the highlight of China – the “New Shanghai” that is fascinating by any “visual” standard. Not only is Shanghai among the fastest growing cities in the world – a city with unabashed global ambitions – the city today is expanding like a cosmopolitan consumer-loving metropolis on steroids.

Like everyone who is excited by China's speed of economic growth, my interest in Shanghai finds form in the skyline of China's economic powerhouse. The new skyline Shanghai is *Lujiazui*, the Central Business District (CBD) of Pudong located across the river from the Old Shanghai, consisting of a series of skyscrapers, reflective high-rise towers, and monumental urban boulevards. The image was impressive. I could not avoid asking many questions about the economic underpinnings of the city. Considering the infancy of Lujiazui, the scale of the development is too huge to believe that it was the capitalist market demand that has created this city of skyscrapers. Then, if it was not the economics, what was it? If it was not the need for space for service industries and financial sectors, just like any Western metropolis, the question being addressed is what was the stimulation for this new city? The answer is not as simple as the ease of financing taking into account the desired fast turnover business strategy, and the prominent position of a financial entity in the context of China's leaping toward global enterprise. In other words, the incentive of global investment might be adequate to support the reason why China wants to invest, but it was not enough to say that it is the reason for building a new city on blank land across the river from the existing settlement.

So, my assumption is that there are “forces” that underlie this unforeseen consequence of urbanism. It seems like architecture and urban form are, and will continue to be, utilized as tangible representations of the city's expected growth – the physical articulations of the perceptions of global progress. My aim is to identify the rationale for this phenomenon and point out the conditions that do not only underlie the making of Shanghai urbanism, but also characterize the reality of the city. I seek to examine the role of architecture and urbanism as instruments in the transformation process of the city to the metropolis as a result of cultural, political, and economic

perspectives, all of which hopefully uncover new potential, rather than discussing *fait accompli*.

This thesis began when I was in China taking part in the celebrated MIT-Tsinghua's Beijing Urban Design Studio in the summer of 2006. Before the studio, I had no particular interest in Shanghai or China. I even deliberately avoided being involved in the discourse due to my lack of interest in any of the "trendy topics" – everybody in the school seemed to be attracted to China. These faddish topics, to me, tend to die out after the excitement dies down. Thus, the initial decision to take this China study was merely about my interest in urban design, not China. I arrived in Shanghai for a few days before the Studio and traveled in the city with keen curiosity and eyes wide open. Like someone who was born a hundred year ago, frozen in a time capsule, and one day awakened to face reality, I was amazed by basically everything I saw. The urban symbolism made the city difficult to read: I felt like I was in a dreamland where everything is embellished for visual pleasure. At the time, I was not aware that the deep structure of Shanghai's urbanism is more than just what we see on the façade of spectacular buildings. Shanghai was not my love at first sight. I was not immediately interested in Shanghai, but my interest in the city grew the deeper I probed. It was not until I went back for the second time in the Winter of 2007 for a workshop on the city's morphology that I decided to work on the topic, which continued to bring me back to Shanghai for a couple more times in less than six months of my first visit. For some reason – and, of course, a good reason – I went to Shanghai four times that year.

Perhaps, it was something in my Chinese roots that caught my interest. I grew up in a family of Chinese immigrants in the northeast of Thailand. My grandparents were born in the south of China not so far from Shanghai, and moved to Thailand during the turmoil of the Great Leap Forward. As a second generation Thai-born Chinese son raised by the first generation, I was acquainted with so-called "Chinese pragmatism" in which one relies on the tangible value and the permanence of things as opposed to investing in ideas. It was not the calculation or numbers that counted, but the physicality – as a clear return – that should satisfy the mind of the business owner.

When I saw Shanghai for the first time, I thought of this concept of Chinese pragmatism, which is embedded in my mentality. It is the perhaps for this reason that I want to understand myself through cultural construction. The ancient Chinese built the Great Wall of China to keep out foreign invasion. The modern Chinese built the *Great Façade* of Shanghai to lure them back. Both are monumental, permanent and tangible.

Non Arkaraprasertkul  
August 2007  
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My most cherished moments of writing this thesis were when I thought of those to whom I am grateful. For one who believes in the art of gratitude, an acknowledgement is as important as the thesis itself. As it is my habit to read the acknowledgment before reading any book, this is my attempt to write my own to convey my exuberant thankfulness to all those who supported me and helped me to ground the history of this thesis with extensive scholarship. Along the process, I have been helped, inspired, and mentored by people, perhaps unknown to some of them, whose interests lie in the mutual understanding of culture. This thesis is not supposed to reflect overwhelming scholarship, as it neither is a book nor dissertation, but my sincere hope is for it to be a substantive work that contributes to the understanding of architecture and its role in constructing culture at large. Therefore, I want to not only show appreciation to those who have helped in developing this thesis, but I also want to express my gratitude to those who have warned me about spreading myself too thin in the vast landscape of architectural knowledge.

*First of all, I dedicate this thesis to my history teachers: Stan, John, and Bob.*

Architects and historians who care about constructive criticism owe a great debt to Stanford Anderson, perhaps the most globally influential History Theory and Criticism teacher. Stan taught me not only how to think and critique as a process, but also how to write methodologically. His profound clarity and simplicity at points of complexity have been the model for my literary development. Whatever I have learned about architectural history, and whatever I believe about architecture as a socio-cultural practice will be rooted in Stan's teachings.

Professor John W. Dower has been instrumental in teaching me the excitement of history, and moreover, the enjoyment of writing history. I was extremely fortunate to have met and studied with him during my final semester – fortunately, it was not too late. His enthusiasm for Shanghai motivated me to dig deeper with depth and intensity. I have learned from him the writing that exhibits clarity in planning, resulting in the historical narratives that are direct, simple, and elegant. While I may not daydream to someday write like a Pulitzer Prize laureate, I aspire to write as John does.

Dr. Robert Cowherd is the reader of this thesis. Without his strong faith in my capability, I would not have continued to study history after my first year in the HTC program. His seminar, *Cultural Construction of Asian Cities*, was the catalyst of my deep curiosity in East Asian urbanization, which was the incentive to write this thesis. The seminar also enticed me to be interested in the way architecture works in the urban context – not only in a physical sense, but also in a spiritual, emotional, and psychological one. Bob's constant support, intellectual guidance, and rigorous criticism have been invaluable. He also deserves thanks for his continuous belief in this thesis.

I would like to thank Professor Yung Ho Chang, my thesis supervisor, for his sincere and direct advice, especially concerning the issues of applications of “Chinese pragmatism.” I have learned a lot from working and studying with him. Yung Ho has been truly supportive in my search and has been a great teacher.

I am also grateful for the timely advice of my unofficial committee in Cambridge. I owe my sincere thanks to Professor Peter G. Rowe, Raymond Garbe Professor of Architecture and Urban Design and University Distinguished Service Professor at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, who has decisively and patiently read my two seminar papers and this thesis, grounding me with the important understanding of urbanization of East Asian countries as a whole. I warmly acknowledge the advice and support of Professor Shigeru Miyagawa at MIT for his work on *Visualizing Culture*, which served as impetus and inspiration for this thesis.

I would like to thank Jordan Kaufmann, Karin Oen, William Ho, Noy Hildebrand, and Professor Mark Jarzombek for reading the manuscript, and especially to Dr. Saipin Suputtamongkol for reading the entire manuscript and making professional suggestions for improvement. This thesis benefited from her excellent reading and editing the entire manuscript. In addition for Mark, the excessive “Jarzombian footnotes” is the product of the *Methods* class I took with him in the Fall of 2006 – by far the best class I had at MIT. Ben Matteson provided a vital sounding board for ideas about the global-local relationship, the practice of an urbanist architect, and especially the critique in writing about history and theory. Ben also suggested tremendous improvement in terms of argument. Furthermore, I would like to thank Victor Wong for his thoughtful and dedicated editing of this thesis. I also would like to mention Winnie Wong, who was actually the first person who ignited my interest in Shanghai and its urban context. Winnie read and helped me refine my abstract and research proposal at the beginning of my thesis year.

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I would not have been able to write this thesis without consistent help, moral support, and inspiration from the writing consultants and editors of the MIT's Writing Center: Bob Irwin, Marilyn Levin, Bob Doherty, and Dr. Steve Strang. I would like to thank Jane Dunphy and Patricia Brennecke at the Foreign Language Department, whose words "writing is definitely the craft for everyone to learn," give me hope in pursuing studies in history. Patricia is the best English teacher I have ever had.

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It all started eight years ago when I was an exchange student in Oklahoma, where I was sent to the home of Victor Alexander Wong, my first intellectual teacher. In every respect, my comprehension has been shaped by his sharp, succinct and logical advice. His fingerprints appear on many of my arguments and writing. I thank Victor for teaching me how to think with a critical mind, how to listen with critical ears, and how to see with critical eyes. His inspiration brought me back to America. His moral support continues to give me strength and his thorough understanding of both Chinese and American cultures serves as a constructive sounding board. I am grateful to *always* have his wonderful support.

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## ***Glossary of Chinese Terms***

Shanghai	上海
Beijing	北京
Canton	广东
Century Avenue	世纪大道
Cultural Revolution	文化大革命
danwei	单位
Deng Xioping	邓小平
Dong Dayou	董大酉
Great Leap Forward	大跃进
Huangpu River	黄浦江
Jiang Zemin	江泽民
kaifang	开封
kaifang (pagoda)	开封(祐国寺塔)
lilong	里弄
Lujiazui	陆家嘴
Ma Qingyun	马清运
Mao Zedong	毛泽东
Nanjing	南京
Open Door Policy	门户开放政策
Pudong	浦东
Puxi	浦西
Suzhou Creek	苏州河
The Bund	外滩
Tiananmen Square	天安门广场
Waibaidu Bridge	外白渡桥
Yan'an Road	延安路
Zheng Shiling	郑时龄
Zhu Rongji	朱镕基

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***Shanghai Contemporary:  
The Politics of Built Form***

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## ***Introduction***

If a Shanghai man who lived seventy years ago traveled through time and arrived at Shanghai today, he would not have any idea that he had arrived in the city of his birth. He would be astonished by what he saw, despite the fact that Shanghai in the early twentieth century contained stylistically and representationally sophisticated urban elements, such as *The Bund* and the neo-classic buildings in the French Concession. First, he would find that The Bund, the famous commercial corridor constructed in the early twentieth century running north-south along the West bank of the Huangpu River, was no longer the city's primary image – no longer constituted his familiar identification of the city. Shanghai was now dominated by the bigger, bolder, and more hyperbolized *Lujiazui*, the new skyline across the river. While the old skyline might remind him of the city's colonial past, this present visage epitomizes an otherwise unimaginable future.

Moreover, he might find that not only was the appearance of the city changed, but also its urban pattern. Surrounded by the incredibly tall, big, wide, and long structures of Lujiazui, he might have lost his sense of scale and security. Shanghai, he felt, had become unfriendly to pedestrians. He could no longer bike or walk freely across the neighborhood. The "land of swamps" of the time from which he came has now been turned into a high-tech financial district - something that exceeded his wildest imagination. The first challenge that confronts him is to figure out how to survive in this tremendously dull atmosphere. This adaptation is so dramatic that he would feel nostalgic for his old hometown. This is not unlike many Shanghainese who experienced first-hand the drama of the delirious change of Chinese commercial and cosmopolitan culture. It would be difficult to associate himself with either the surface level of what he saw, or the deep structure of the new city's conception.

Shanghai's urbanism is not conventional; and it *never* has been. Never so quickly has a settlement transformed from a simple mud village into a metropolis famous for its spectacular foreign architectural and urban cultures. Some call this urban phenomenon "hybrid urbanism"<sup>1</sup> signifying the condition of heterogeneity of urban form. Urbanism of

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<sup>1</sup> The term "hybridity" emerged in academic discourse at the turn of the twentieth-first century regarding the issues and major challenges traditional settlements were facing, i.e. massive urbanization and suburbanization, the spread of consumerism, the internationalization of labor, and the growth of expatriate migrant populations and ethnic minorities. According to Nezar AlSayyad, "hybrid environment" simply

Shanghai began with *Puxi* on the west, to be followed by Pudong on the east of Haungpu River. If the attempt to build Puxi in the 1930s was to resemble a historic and romanticized Paris,<sup>2</sup> it was obviously Manhattan that inspired the planning of Pudong.<sup>3</sup>

As *urbanization* complicates every scale of the city's physical and cultural restructuring, Shanghai today is not only Chinese, but the world's "Fast City," capable in accommodating a massive entrepreneurial economy, cosmopolitan culture, and an

---

accommodates or encourages pluralistic tendencies or multicultural practices, which should be turned on its head." Accordingly, to say that urbanism of Shanghai is hybrid might be problematic since what it represents are two separate environments, rather than a fusion of different elements that creates a new entity.

For details, see Nezar AlSayyad. "Hybrid Culture/ Hybrid Urbanism: Pandora's Box of the "Third Space," in Nezar AlSayyad, ed., *Hybrid Urbanism* (Westport, Connecticut; London: Praeger, 2001), 1-20, and "Identity, Tradition and Built form: The Role of Culture in Planning and Development," *A Description of 1996 International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE) Conference in Berkeley, CA*, <http://arch.ced.berkeley.edu/research/iaste/1996%20conference.htm> (accessed 16 April 2007)

<sup>2</sup> Shanghai was once called "Paris of the Orient" by the English Tour Book *All About Shanghai* (1935). It was also called the "Paris of the East," and the "Queen of the Pacific." Although the names seem to pronounce particular prestige, one cannot conclude that they do not have any negative connotation. For instance, "the Paris of the East" was somehow associated with "the Whore of the Orient," while the "Queen of the Pacific" was linked to the name the "Emperor's Ugly Daughter." Moreover, Lee Khoon Choy asserts interesting comments: "[t]he name Shanghai conjures an image a city where quick riches could be made, and a tumble of vice, swindlers, gamblers, drug runners, the idle rich, dandies, tycoons, missionaries, gangsters and backstreet pimps." Nonetheless, Shanghai has been a remarkable city that drew attention from people from all over China and the globe. See Stella Dong, *Shanghai: The Rise and Fall of a Decadent City* (New York: Perennial, 2001), Shiling Zheng, "Architecture Before 1949," in Balfour, *Shanghai: World City* (West Sussex, U.K., Wiley-Academy, 2002), 88, *All About Shanghai: A Standard Guidebook*, Hong Kong; New York: Oxford University Press, 1935) republished in 1986 with an introduction by H.J. Lethbridge. Repr., and Lee Khon Choy, *Pioneers of Modern China: Understanding the Inscrutable Chinese* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2005), 409

<sup>3</sup> In 1993, Mayor Huang Ju of Shanghai proclaimed his intention to make the city to be "a metropolis equal to New York and London." The city's development plan under his direction was designed to create an "oriental Manhattan...to become an international metropolis of the 21<sup>st</sup> century." "City of Future," *Shanghai Star* (2 July 1993, front-page headline) as cited in Jos Gamble, *Shanghai in Transition: Changing Perspectives and Social Contours of a Chinese Metropolis* (London, Routledge: 2003), 10

attractive aesthetic designed to entice a creative workforce to sustain economic growth.<sup>4</sup> Shanghai's built form and environment are not merely expressing the logic of inhabitation; instead, they purposely embrace a certain set of global forces, shaping urban form and experience in space and time.



Figure 1: Shanghai's Lujiazui, photograph taken from the old part of Shanghai.  
Photograph: Shanghai Municipal Government

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<sup>4</sup> Shanghai is one of 30 cities identified by *The Economist* as "Fast Cities" based on several criteria such as economic opportunity, cultural and intellectual infrastructure, ethereal creativity, and so on. It describes Shanghai as "a city of 14.5 million people, where foreign investors have sunk \$73 billion into Shanghai-based projects. It is a chaotic, crowded, noisy-and wildly, *crazily creative*. China's historic center for innovation has emerged more recently as a magnet for Western-owned corporate design centers and research labs." See Andrew Park, "Fast Cities 2007," *The Economist* (Jul/Aug 2007, 117): 90-103

For the operation of this plastic surgery of cultural urbanism to function, political agents are notably conscious of the consequential action and impact given by the new appearance. They must also take into account the cultural system of the “receivers” in order to be flexible to dramatic change; otherwise, this operation would fail. Shanghai, however, works economically. That is to say, Shanghai, since its opening to the world as a Treaty Port in the 1840s (arguably a “semi-colonization”), has been a city with *soft cultural infrastructure*. This organizational structure allows the diverse architectural cultures to represent different cultural norms while still maintaining their representational integrity by means of its architectural and urban orderings. The vast diversity of symbolism and iconography in the appearance of Western built forms has complicated the social and cultural milieu of the city, leading to an active amalgamation of architecture and urban form. Shanghai’s city form has never been truly traditional; instead, growth and expansion has always been dictated by the distinctive patchworks of forms representative of the myriad of the urban influences brought to the city over time.

### **Research Questions**

Taking into account the representational form of Shanghai’s cityscape as the result of a push from its internal economic and political systems, this thesis seeks to deliver pragmatic answers to two conceptual questions. The first involves the conception of the hybrid urban city, by examining the transformation of the cityscape.<sup>5</sup> The second asks

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<sup>5</sup> The choice of the term “hybrid” is in keeping with the use of this term in architectural and urbanist writings on the histories of cities and their cultures. The elaboration of this term can be found in Robert Cowherd, “Hybridization Between an Imagined West and the Persistence of Everyday Life,” in Robert Cowherd, *Cultural Construction of Jakarta*:

how *the politics of built form* impact the transformation of the city. The answer to these questions will unravel the course of urban phenomenon, clarifying the working impetuses that affect practice and production of architecture in this particular context. “Politics” in this sense, however, is not confined to the governance of China, or the strong hand of an authoritarian communist state. Rather, the term seeks to identify the architectural means of power and status, and the position of society in a global system – specifically, in the architectural and urban planning of Shanghai. For such a city of abrupt transitions,<sup>6</sup> the impact of the changing environment can be understood as a part of the larger political dialogue between East and West.<sup>7</sup>

Mario Gandelsonas points out that the radical restructuring of Shanghai’s infrastructure and urban fabric represents China’s search for an alternative modernity, “a modernity transformed to meet the contemporary forms of cultural, political and economic conditions.”<sup>8</sup> The product of this purposeful departure from the traditional past to the culturally construed *future*, and the resulting representation of the built form and environment strike me as a compelling area of investigation. For instance, as Richard Marshall observes: “Lujiazui presents an uncompromising vision of the future of [the] Chinese city... [presenting the fact that] China is now seeking to capture a larger role in

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*Design, Planning, and Development in Jabotabek, 1980-1997*, Ph.D. dissertation. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Jos Gamble, “Preface: Ethnography of a City,” in Gamble, *Shanghai in Transition*, I-XXVI

<sup>7</sup> Yawei Chan, “Shanghai Pudong: Urban Development in an Era of Global-Local Interaction” (Ph.D. dissertation, Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands, 2007), 43

<sup>8</sup> Mario Gandelsonas, *Shanghai Reflections: Architecture, Urbanism, and the Search for an Alternative Modernity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 22.

world affairs [and] Lujiazui is one of the primary instrumentalities to *propel* this emergence.”<sup>9</sup>

Using Gandelsonas’ term in this context, we might understand this transformation as the *condition of a Chinese modernity*, which gives birth to the inexplicable development phenomenon in Shanghai. In the same way, as the history of the Bund cannot be thought of as the result of a particular pattern of urbanism as separate from that of the foreign concessions’ districts, the making of Lujiazui cannot be thought of as an expression from within.<sup>10</sup> Using this as the basis for studying the contextualized relationship between Shanghai’s architecture and urban orders beyond the surface scenery of fancy buildings and embellished urbanism, it is possible to see and discover the architectural and urban history of Shanghai from the beginning of the twenty-first century through the lenses of history, theory, and criticism.

### **Postmodern Society: The Critical Hypothesis**

The culture of a consumption society, the desire to have an opening to the international market economy (and socialist economy), and an ideology mimicking a capitalist society are the main forces that are altering the physicality of the city.<sup>11</sup> As

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Marshall, “The Focal Point of China: Lujiazui, Shanghai,” in Richard Marshall, *Emerging Urbanity: Global Urban Projects in Asia Pacific Rim* (London, New York: Spon Press, 2003): 87.

<sup>10</sup> Peter G. Rowe, *East Asia Modern: Shaping the Contemporary City* (London: Reaktion, 2005)

<sup>11</sup> Louisa Schein, “Urbanity, Cosmopolitanism, Consumption,” in Nancy N. Chen, Costance D. Clark, Suzanne Z. Gottschang, and Lyn Jeffery, eds. *China Urban* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 225



urban culture cannot be detached from this physical environment, the phenomenon of “Postmodern China” might best be characterized as the terrain of diversely rendered cultural norms. The emergence of spatial plurality, *hybridity*, and inclusiveness are strategies of survival for the international preeminence of China in response to a new globalized environment.<sup>12</sup> The making of urban architecture is influenced by political independence, or “pragmatic nationalism,” which is the act of liberating China from others by means of economic superiority after Deng Xiaoping’s reform in the 1970s.

In Shanghai, contemporary architecture has become a bold symbol of development – a signifier of progress in the discourse of urban semiotics. The changing of Shanghai’s “postcard scenery” from the colonial-style of the Bund on Puxi side to the New Commercial Development District on Pudong side, particularly the Oriental Pearl telecommunication tower and the Jin Mao Tower, within less than a decade is an absolutely astonishing urban phenomenon. The fact that this phenomenon is not unexpected, but has been carefully planned and ambitiously encouraged, highly inspired me to begin this research. Because the built form and environment are mediated by its populace understanding the political agendas or programs of Shanghai’s ethnically

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<sup>12</sup>Anne-Marie Broudehoux presumes that the condition of Postmodernity in China was pushed by the cultural fever of the 1970s by Deng Xiaoping’s “Open Door” policy. Forefront Chinese intellectuals, searching for “the” ideological means of culture and art of the time, held intellectual discourses on cultural production and repositioning of Chinese modernity, including architecture. For details, see Arif Dirlik and Zhang Xudong, “Introduction: Postmodernism in China,” *Boundary 2*. Vol. 24 No. 3 (Autumn, 1997): 1-18. This essay is a proceeding of Fredric Jameson’s lecture at Beijing University in 1985, Wang Mingxian and Zhang Xudong. “Notes on Architecture and Postmodernism in China,” *Boundary 2*. Vol. 24. No. 3 (Autumm, 1997): 163-175, Anne-Marie Broudehoux, “Learning from Chinatown: The Search for a Modern Chinese Architectural Identity, 1911-1998,” ,” in Nezar AlSayyad, *Hybrid Urbanism*, 156-80, and Xudong Zhang, “Part 1: Cultural Discourse,” in *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1997): 35-70

diverse inhabitants and, the relationship between them is crucial to the understanding of its urban culture and physicality.<sup>13</sup> While researching Shanghai's past, it is tempting, like our previously mentioned time traveler, to make expected recommendations for Shanghai to maintain its urban heritage as a significant component. My objective, however, is to deliberately avoid such an expectation. Rather I aim to point out the key transformations and to offer critical views that will serve as a springboard for the future design and development of the city. This research will contribute to the theory of how we *conceive* and *experience* the architecture and urbanism of every hybridized city in a practical manner from the perspectives of both the pedestrian and architect-planner, which is critical to the understanding of Shanghai and similar cities.

My thesis is an attempt to integrate research, architectural knowledge, and fieldwork to understand complex phenomenon of the recent urban transformation of Shanghai, one of the world's fastest growing cities. By using a multi-disciplinary approach, the goal of this research is to inform a practical relevant practice of architecture in various empirical dimensions – believed by me to be the core of History, Theory, and Criticism as opposed to the obsolete criticism of the past or an ideal recommendation that ignores reality. That is, my criticism by no means seeks to dichotomize the past and the present of Shanghai through the justification of social value; rather it tries to draw attention to the intrinsic relationships and trends of development, revealing a potential direction for further investigation. I believe that the potential of the simultaneity of practice and theory can be rendered through the definitive findings of a constructive research program.

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## **Structure of this Thesis**

This thesis consists of three chapters; which together form a coherent analysis answering the questions posed above. This introduction gives a brief rationale of the research, presenting the methodology of the research and discussing the critical hypotheses. The two following chapters state the important points on the politicization of built form and environment of the city, leading to the third chapter which cross-examines findings from the previous two using the politics of built form as a framework. The first chapter, “History, Power and Modern Shanghai,” begins with a historical account for understanding Shanghai as a city of sudden growth. It sketches Shanghai’s urban timeframe. In this chapter, I critically assess the long-standing hybrid condition of Shanghai’s urbanism. In the second chapter, “Politicization and the Rhetoric of Shanghai Urbanism,” I present a set of observations on the expression of politicized urban form, and contemporary architecture as a means of urban iconography. In the third chapter, “The Politics of Built Form,” after a brief summary of the findings of the previous chapters, I reflect upon a number of issues brought up by the previous chapters concerning both physical and economic consequences of Shanghai’s urban form. I will show that the context of *Shanghai Contemporary* is an internally ordered system of built form and environment that balances the singularity of architectural image and the plurality of urban image as influenced by politics.

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## Chapter One

### *History, Power, and Modern Shanghai*

“We know that Rome was not built in one day; but sometimes I think Shanghai could be re-built in one night,” said a Shanghai historian whom our time traveler ran into and discussed his interest in the new city’s image while looking across the river to the hyperbolic skyline of Pudong. She was looking at the new World Financial Center, which will become one of the world’s tallest skyscrapers in less than a year. Her words strike our time traveler as contemporary version of Shanghai’s outlook in the flavor of H.J. Lethbridge’s classic introduction to the best-selling 1934 *All About Shanghai and Environs: A Standard Guidebook*: “Shanghai, the most cosmopolitan city in the world, the fishing village on a mudflat, which almost literally overnight became a great metropolis.”<sup>14</sup>

Of course, she was being ironic about the rapid transformation of her birthplace, which has occurred during the last twenty years of her life as a Shanghainese. Being a typical visitor to the “new Shanghai” – like our time traveler – one would be overwhelmed by the image of elegant Western style buildings, and would not have any idea that the history of Shanghai *de facto* dates back to more than a thousand years ago, which is a “reasonable misunderstanding” given the conspicuous absence of a visible traditional Chinese architectural heritage in Shanghai.

This chapter presents the history of the growth of the city and its urban phenomenon of the Bund and Lujiazui in relation to its larger context – both the national and the global.<sup>15</sup> The objective of this chapter is to understand how Shanghai came to be what it is today through an analytical study of its history.

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<sup>14</sup> H.J. Lethbridge, *All About Shanghai and Environs: A Standard Guidebook* (London, Oxford University Press, 1934): 1. Republished as on-line version on “Tale of Old Shanghai” website. “All About Shanghai: Chapter 1 - Historical Background.” <http://www.talesofoldchina.com/library/allaboutshanghai/t-all01.htm> (retrieved 17 April 2007). The full paragraph reads: “Shanghai, sixth city of the World!, Shanghai, the Paris of the East!, Shanghai, the New York of the West! – Shanghai, the most cosmopolitan city in the world, the fishing village on a mudflat, which almost literally overnight became a great metropolis.”

<sup>15</sup> When we talk about the history of a Chinese city, we tend to think of some general categorizations such as Early Imperial China (from Qin to Han Dynasty), Three Kingdoms China, Late Imperial China (Ming and Qing), Communist, and so on; these

## **The Opening: Pre-Colonial Shanghai**

Although Shanghai is old, its urban history is not. Because of the limited written records on Shanghai prior to the Sung Dynasty (960-1279), it was commonly thought of as a relatively “small rural fishing village.” This commonly-held view of Shanghai, however, appears to be just a myth. Recent research shows substantial evidence that Shanghai was, in fact, a medium-size market town.<sup>16</sup> Its strategic location as a coastal port was self-explanatory. Since the early years of Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368), Shanghai had become the capital of the coastal county. Its close connection to the Huangpu River<sup>17</sup> and network of waterways such as Suzhou Creek give clues as to how this small city might have had a strategic location. Shanghai’s favorable economic positioning slowly established it as an administrative city of the coast.<sup>18</sup> As a result, urban infrastructure including roads, local ports, and commercial hubs were built, and people from other parts of China traveled to this city searching for economic opportunity.

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periods base on the sharply-definition of sovereign rules’ times. However, for Shanghai, as the history of the city has been mostly dependant, it maybe more appropriate to look at its history as an outcome of the overlapping periods of urbanization driven by the external impetus; in doing so, we will be able to observe both the continuity and abrupt change of the city in regards to the process of transformation – visually and morphologically.

<sup>16</sup> This claim is made by an intensive study of Shanghai’s history prior to the arrival of the Westerners by Linda Johnson. See Linda Cooke Johnson, *Shanghai, From Market Town to Treaty Port, 1074-1858* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995). “A small fishing village” rhetoric was made by foreigners. Despite the exhaustive historical accounts that possibly leads to this major misunderstanding, is to make the story of the city’s transformation more dramatic.

<sup>17</sup> Also called “Whangpu River.”

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Until the seventeenth century (late Ming Dynasty), there is no record of maps of Shanghai. This seems to support the assumption that Shanghai had not expanded much during the course of four hundred years. Numbers of people from outside were not large enough to alter the city from being a medium-sized self-contained market town enclosed by a wall, typical of traditional Chinese cities. A major intervention, however, took place around the mid-nineteenth century through the involuntary opening of the city to the outside as the Opium War. In 1842 – the signing of Treaty of Nanjing allowed the legitimization of foreign interventions in China for the first time. The first party of English traders arrived in Shanghai on November 17, 1843, followed by the French. The city was consequently divided into two territories: the British settlement and the French concession. Shanghai was gradually re-built and transformed under foreign rulers with superior weaponry. The absolute dominance of the extraterritoriality seized forcibly from the Chinese in their own city.

## Treaty Port of the 1840s: The Semi-Colonial Shanghai

What Shanghai had to offer to those foreign powers was access to ports. Foreign investors gravitated toward an extensive waterfront that gave access to *Suzhou Creek*, a strategic transportation route to other parts of China.<sup>19</sup> The Puxi area on the west bank of the Huangpu was transformed from agricultural land into the international port city of the Far East.<sup>20</sup> The concessions brought about by foreign treaties did not colonize Shanghai in the traditional sense. As historian Leo Lee asserts, “[a]lthough Shanghai did not face the same colonial situation as in colonial India [,]...the discrepancies between the privileged and the rest of the city, levying on the Chinese, could be worse than the strict colony.”<sup>21</sup>

Not only did foreigners build, but they also dwelt in and developed the city using particular architectural and urban forms derived from their diverse origins. Thus, the overall structure of the city was planned to satisfy commercial, industrial, and recreational demands, in addition to living accommodations. The domination of foreign planning was absolute. The internal social formation of the locals failed to resist the planning culture. The most salient planning feature foreign developers introduced to the city was the “lilong,” a low-rise row house adapted from the Western-style to accommodate the

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<sup>19</sup> There was also a connection to the hinterland and the spillover benefits from proto-industrialization in the neighboring provinces, along with the buoyancy of regional commerce that contributed significantly to Shanghai’s prosperity. See Weiping Wu, *The Dynamics of Urban Growth in Three Chinese Cities* (Washington D.C.: Oxford University Press, 1997): 66

<sup>20</sup> As Shiling Zheng describes: “Shanghai in its prime during 1930s-40s could not find any match to its sophisticated cosmopolitanism, not even Tokyo or Hong Kong. See Balfour, *Shanghai*, 89.

<sup>21</sup> The classic example is a sign “No Dogs Or Chinese Allowed” at the entrance of a park in foreign-leased-territory (i.e. race court and the Bund waterfront) in Shanghai, which fought with the strong sense of “ethnic nationalism” – an articulation of “Han Chinese” identity, dealing with the pre-conceived notion that they were the initiators of the civilization. Therefore, throughout the course of semi-colonization, Chinese had to struggle to overthrow the aliens (the white imperialists for Shanghai, the alien Manchu rulers for the rest of the country). This was, of course, before the founding of the Republic of China under Kuomintang leadership. Har Ye Kan, email message to the author, 22 March 2007.



families of Shanghainese workers who preferred to work for the foreign industries, and “the rule of law and the safety of the foreigners’ enclaves.”<sup>22</sup>

In terms of planning, the gridiron structure of the city’s urban blocks was then defined by the geometry of this modern housing – straight lines and perpendicular angles were convenient for the division of the land, for the laying of plumbing infrastructure, and for electric tramway and bus traffic. Not so long after the first building stage in the 1870s, more than 200,000 *lilong* dwelling units were built and became the dominating morphological characteristic of Shanghai’s urban fabric. This structure constituted the urban form of Shanghai, determining the spatial organization for other parts of the city.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> It was around the 1860s, not only political upheaval, but also better job opportunities that attracted an increasing numbers of migrants from the hinterland to Shanghai – the number of Chinese inhabitants in the International Settlement rose from 75,000 to half a million within less than three decades. The design of the *lilong* is a combination of a Western terrace house tradition with the Chinese courtyard house in a manner that perpetuated the narrow lanes of earlier Chinese settlement. See Lei Huang, *Housing Development in the Context of the Modernization, Urbanization and Conservation of Chinese Traditional cities: Beijing, Shanghai and Suzhou*. D.Des. dissertation. Harvard University, 2000: 89, Tess Johnston and Deke Erh, *A Last Look: Western Architecture in Old Shanghai* (Hong Kong: Old China Hand Press, 1992):8, and Peter Rowe and Seng Kuan. *Architectural Encounters with Essence and Form in Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002): 40-1. Critical reading of *lilong* housing can be found in Non Arkaraprasertkul, “Toward Shanghai’s Urban Housing: Re-Defining Shanghai’s *Lilong*” *Proceeding of the Sixth China Urban Housing Conference in Beijing, P.R. China*, Hong Kong: Center of Housing Innovations at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Ministry of Construction, P.R. China. 2007: 885-97

<sup>23</sup> This structure remains the main structure of the city today, although not as dominant due to the new planning and the new zoning regulations.

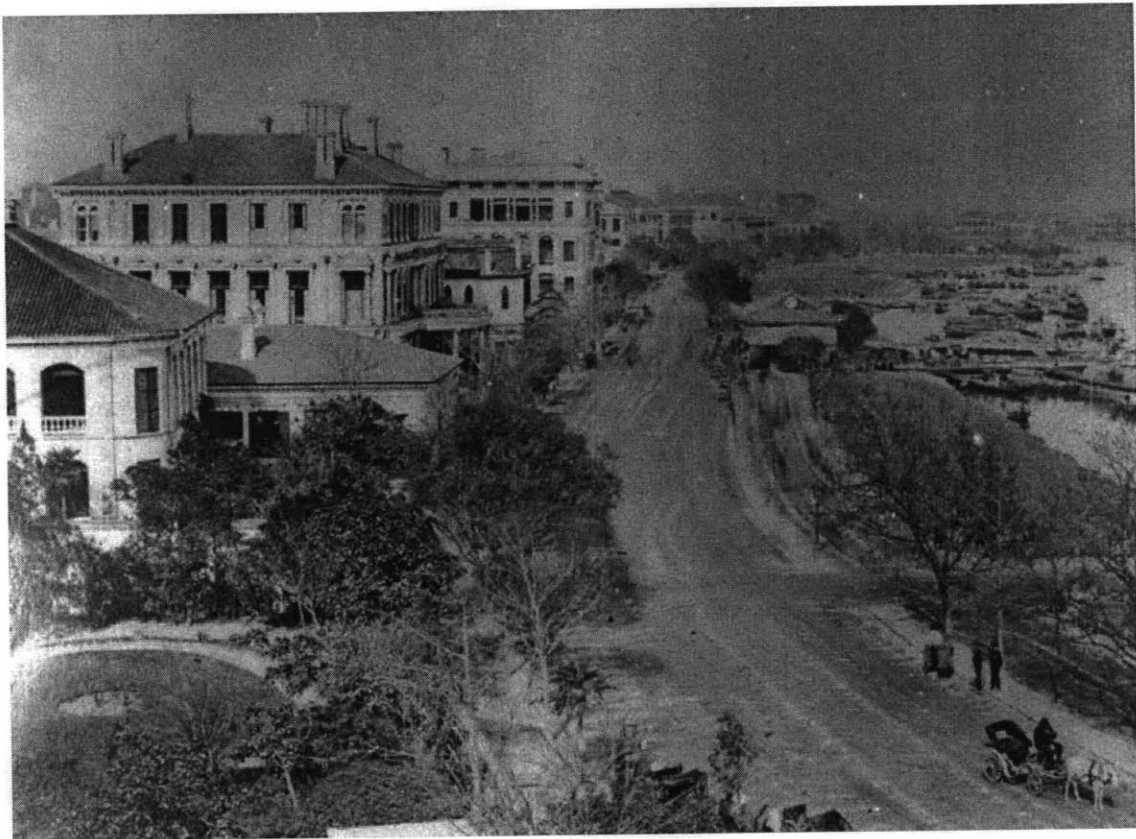


Figure 2: View of the Bund at dawn, International Settlement part of Shanghai in the 1880s. Photograph: Visual Shanghai Project

Westerners also introduced modern facilities to the Chinese who accepted these concessions, including gaslight, electricity, running water, and of course, automobiles were mostly limited to only the concessions area. The lines between different concessions, and between them and Chinese lands were clear. Physical barriers such as roads and walls made the division between different concessions and Chinese rural lands abundantly clear. Such an abrupt leap from rural to urban was unparalleled in China, and as such loosened the characteristics of Shanghai from the rigid confines of tradition. There was the first decade of the boom of prostitution, gambling, and drug smuggling, which would become the major face of Shanghai until the Communists took over in the mid-twentieth century. Stella Dong, dysphemistically describes, "...Shanghai at the time ranked as "the

most pleasure-mad, rapacious, corrupt, strife-driven, licentious, squalid, and decadent city in the world.”<sup>24</sup>

A decade after the turn of the twentieth century, foreign wherewithal and the flowering of treaty port business gave Shanghai a dual structure of “cosmopolitanism and entrepreneurialism.”<sup>25</sup> Advantages that Shanghai had over other Far Eastern metropolises included foreign technology, proximity to raw materials (especially cotton-growing lands), cheap electricity, reliable financial institutions for “handling increasingly sophisticated transactions, and an extensive and already-skilled labor force.”<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the accelerating financial circulation in Shanghai at the time had disconnected the city culturally from the rest of China, accentuating the confrontation between modernized Shanghai and the rest of traditional country.<sup>27</sup> Several iterations of urban development were part of the process of making Shanghai *the* regional business center of the Far East. The necessity for an access point for the port would lead foreign investors to choose a linear waterfront on the riverbank in the British settlement, which was eventually become known as the Bund. <sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Dong, *Shanghai*, 1

<sup>25</sup> Bryan Goodman, “The Golden Age of Chinese Bourgeoisie, 1911-1937 by Marie-Claire Bergère,” book review, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.46 (3, August 1987): 631-3, and Duanfang Lu, “Architecture and Global Imaginations in China,” *Journal of Architecture*, 12 (2, 2007): 139

<sup>26</sup> Peter G. Rowe and Seng Kuan, *Architecture Encounters with Essence and Form in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002): 36

<sup>27</sup> Rhoads Murphey, “The Treaty Ports and China’s Modernization” in *The Chinese City Between Two Worlds*, Mark Elvin and G. William Skinner, eds. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974): 17-71.

<sup>28</sup> “The Bund” is a Persian term meaning “dam.” In Anglo-Indian sense, it means “river embankment.”

## Late Nineteenth Century: The Bund

By the end of the nineteenth century, Shanghai had become the center of construction technology in the Far East. Composite, reinforced concrete, and steel structures were brought into use, leading to the emergence of high-rise buildings. By 1949, there were 38 buildings of more than ten floors in Shanghai – more than any other city in Asia.<sup>29</sup>

“The muddy tow-path of fifty years ago which has magically become one of the most striking and beautiful civic portals in the world, faced from the West by an impressive rampart of modern buildings and bounded on the East by the [Huangpu] River.”<sup>30</sup>

With the “Land Regulations” of 1849, the Bund was subdivided into British and French concessions for commercial investment.<sup>31</sup> The Bund was not originally planned to be an iconic skyline. It was a utilitarian waterfront, a point of reception for trade. The emergence of the treaty port was a major factor that stimulated all large-scale developments in Shanghai. This included foreign trade and commercial production for export, established the groundwork for Western-style higher educational institutions, as well as steered the city toward modern banking investments.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Zheng Shiling, “Architecture Before 1949,” in Balfour, *Shanghai*, 95

<sup>30</sup> H.J. Lethbridge, *All About Shanghai and Environs*

<sup>31</sup> In a series of rather romantic panoramic paintings, two elements were clearly depicted: the buildings and the ships. Horizontally divided by the shoreline, the water and the earth were clearly separated. The buildings looked identical. With an impressionist sky, the Bund in such early paintings was seen more as a peaceful city than a bustling trading port. In contrast to these panoramas, the famous photo of the early Bund shows a street that was not even asphalted and a waterfront that was no more than an inclined slant with some small boats tied up alongside. Its early photographs of the Bund right after the establishment of the Treaty port shows no more than a series of low-rise Western-style buildings in very simplified forms on the “muddy towpath” of the Huangpu River.

<sup>32</sup> Murphey believes that the Treaty Port did not give a substantial impact on the technological and industrial advancements, which were the factors of modernization in the Western worlds. He actually makes a claim that the emergence of such ad hoc urban place like Shanghai *de facto* “hurt China psychologically,” more than it helped her economically. To me personally, this has been a debate and has not yet been finalized. See Murphey, *Treaty Ports*, 17-71

By 1873, the first important building on the Bund was the British Consulate. In this period, Shanghai's dynamism started to attract large numbers of people from around the world. This was the first time that Shanghai surpassed Canton in the seaport business – both in numbers and in entrepreneurial atmosphere.<sup>33</sup> The Bund, the part of the city closest to the ocean, was not only a point of physical transactions. By virtue of its emerging skyline it had become a point of “visual reception” as well. Twenty buildings formed the Bund's skyline beginning with Edward VII Avenue (Yan'an Road) in the south, and ending with the Garden Bridge (Waibaidu Bridge) on Suzhou Creek.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Canton*, the capital of Guangdong province, was the leading industrial and commercial center of southern China at the time. It is also called Guangzhou (or Kwang-chow).

<sup>34</sup> 12 of which were considered iconic due to its existence over half a century (the rest were built and re-built over time). Zhang Zaiyuan notes a few standards that underlie the architectural development of Shanghai in the period: “*Politics* – architecture as a symbol; *economics* – the display of family or corporate wealth; *culture* – the reminiscence of European international metropolises; *landscape* – as a sign of entrance to Shanghai; *technology* – comprehensive performance in design, constructing standards, the use of new materials and facilities.” See Zhang Zaiyuan, “From West to Shanghai: Architecture and Urbanism in Shanghai from 1840-1940,” *A + U: Architecture and Urbanism*. no. 273 (1993): 93

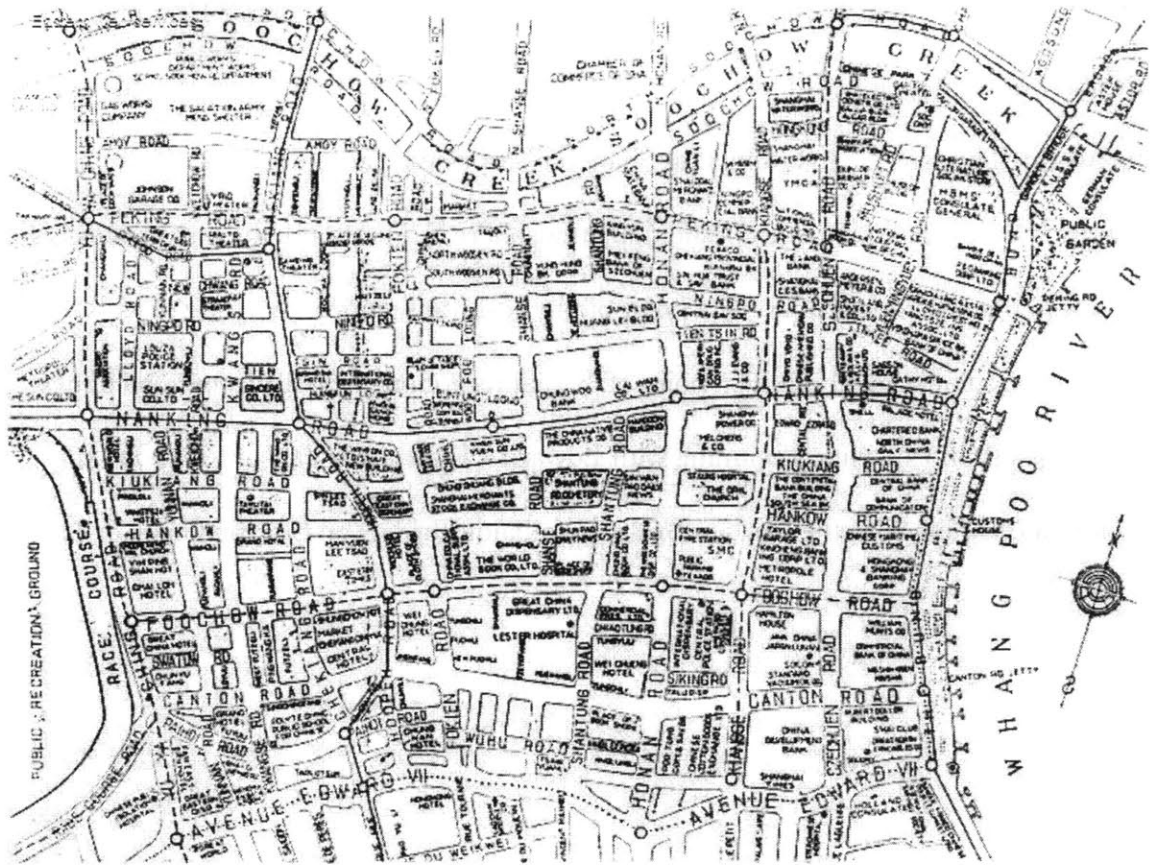


Figure 3: Land Regulation Map showing the proposed Urban Structure of Puxi. Illustration: Virtual Shanghai Project

Buildings on the Bund were perceived as proclamations of business prestige and prosperity. Thus, the Bund was quickly filled with monumental Western-style buildings and became a truly representative image of business to the outside world.

### **Shanghai in the 1930s: Rise and Fall of a Decadent City**

Marginalized by its internationality and lack of historical bond to the rest of China, Shanghai was an autonomous business entity operating under a massively diverse population of both rural migrants and foreigners. The composition of private economic joint-ventures by both Chinese and foreign corporate groups and political society, which

was systematically established during the course of roughly fifty years since the end of the Opium War, developed the city in every respect, prompting it to take its place on the global economic stage. Yet, the city became “heaven built on top of a hell”<sup>35</sup> – the aggregation of crime, violence, guns, gangsters, drug trafficking, and prostitution reached its peak in 1933. Shanghai at the time was as elegant as Paris, as flourishing as Manhattan, and as rowdy and pugnacious as Chicago.



Figure 4: The Bund in the 1930s. Photograph: Visual Shanghai Project

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<sup>35</sup> M. Christine Boyer, “Approaching the Memory of Shanghai: The Case of Zhang Yimou and Shanghai Triad (1995),” in Gandelsonas, *Shanghai Reflections*, 57

Shanghai in the 1930s, in population, was not a city of the indigenous Shanghainese, but of the foreign “Shanghailanders” and the Chinese immigrants who recognized the business value of the port city established by treaty.<sup>36</sup> From the outset of this period, the outsiders had composed Shanghai’s urban history. Marie-Claire Bergère observes that Shanghai was the “Other China.”<sup>37</sup> The contradictory urban scenes were brought about by the abrupt change of the city from rural to urban.

While one might initially imagine a romantic cityscape like Paris when seeing Western style shops and glamorous foreigners in British-style suits, this romanticized Westernized scene would be rudely interrupted by the crowds of shirtless beggars and poor rickshaw pullers in the background. It was the first time that the population of Shanghai was akin to other large cities – the population was more than three million, about 60,000 of whom were foreigners.

The city’s zoning was more defined than it had ever been. The residential districts occupied the inner part toward the western side of the Bund. There was a single elected municipal council that administered Shanghai’s public infrastructural investment, collected revenue, and acted as the main juridical authority. Although the council was meant to represent the de jure rights of the Chinese in regard to the extraterritoriality of the foreigners, it actually reinforced the savage suppression of the Chinese in their own

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<sup>36</sup> Thanks to Lu Hanchao’s *Beyond the Neon Lights*, we know that Shanghai streets in the 1930s were animated by a heterogeneous population. Lu also tells us that the reality of Shanghai was not always like what we see from movies or advertisements, which was a common misunderstanding. See Lu Hanchao, *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999)

<sup>37</sup> See Bergère, *Golden Age*



enclave. That is to say, from the beginning of the treaty port, the entire built environment of Shanghai was controlled by the foreigners – either Western-style or *hybrid*, but with no traditional-style Chinese buildings.

The majority of people were not native, but Chinese immigrants and refugees. As a result, the city was a place of cultural amalgamation, where people from all over China came to seek opportunities to cultivate modern life and be entertained by Western-perceived version of the cultural norm. While there were a large number of Chinese, ranging from those who were at the bottom of the economic system to the bourgeoisie, small groups of foreigners held the key not only to political but also juridical and cultural powers, dominating over the class struggles and the “complexity of social distribution”<sup>38</sup> in modern China. Poverty, in contradistinction to the foreign elitism, was the dominant characteristic of the city that abruptly leapt from rural to urban. Most of the Chinese in Shanghai were poor, but some succeeded in becoming part of the foreign society and their cultural enterprises elevated themselves to a so-called “bourgeoisie,” living a relatively comfortable life.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, “Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Life in Early Twentieth Century Shanghai by Lu Hanchao,” Reviewd Work, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 32 (2; Autumm, 2001): 277

<sup>39</sup> Notwithstanding the elegance of the waterfront corridor, the ambience of “The Bund or Yangtze Road” was heterogeneous to the core. See Bergère, *Golden Age*, and Wasserstrom, *Neon Lights*, 263-79

### **Gateway to Modernization: Shanghai in the 1930s**

During this time, the waterfront area was considered a jewel for any kind of business. From the 1920s up until the early 1940s when the Japanese attacked the British base on Huangpu River, the Bund was indisputably the iconic façade of Shanghai. Often rhetorically contrasted to the “fishing village” myth, the grand appearance of the cityscape was an investment and tourism magnet; every wealthy man wanted to see the city that was “built in a day.” Originally no more than a shoreline for common access to international trading, the Bund was beautified to become a riverfront boulevard, due to the greater emphasis on finance in service of trade. Consequently, buildings in the Bund quickly came to represent the prestige of Shanghai business to the outside world.

The subdivided strip was made available to business owners to build their offices and headquarters. It continued to grow along the shoreline – to the old city wall in the south and the bank of Suzhou Creek in the north. Many foreign architects were invited to collaborate with local Chinese architects on the design of individual buildings in the Bund area. Colonial-style buildings soon dominated Shanghai’s mile-long commercial corridor. Buildings such as the Bank of China (1940s), the Sassoon House (1929), the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank (1923), and Russell & Co. (1881) constituted the *pictorial gesture* of the Bund, and consequently the image of Shanghai *dans l'ensemble*. When ships stopped a mile offshore, the Bund, the charismatic skyline seen from afar, was effective in transmitting

the image of a modern city.<sup>40</sup> And as visual scale altered and intensified with proximity it became clear that the distant image of the city had everything to do with the built form. In other words, the Bund was the inhabitable representation of the new commercial city.

Shanghai's cutting-edge technological advancement also "sharpened the confrontation between China and the West and created a deep dualism."<sup>41</sup> The formal establishments of the foreign settlements reflected a rigid division of social classes and a basic "served-servant" relationship.<sup>42</sup> There was, of course, a certain psychological tension underlining the colonial situation in Shanghai. There was a pre-conceived cultural supposition that the foreigners deserved privileged, which was seen in the minimal resistance of the Chinese themselves who were economically dependent on the foreigners. It was the foreigners who actually created a lucrative city out of a self-sufficient town. The foreigners, at first, urbanized the city through early capitalism, and were fond of being known as the authoritative creators of the city, rather than the inhabitants. It was also the popular perception that the foreigners were the creator of the city.

Interaction between foreigners and the Chinese only happened through the necessity of business, diplomatic meetings, and ethnically-mixed gatherings of the elite.

Historian Jonathan Spence observes:

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<sup>40</sup> The monumental appearance of the Bund attracted both local and foreign investments. It was the objective of business owners to have buildings that proclaimed prestige and prosperity, and Western neo-classicism was chosen to this end.

<sup>41</sup> Murphey, *Treaty Port*, 65

<sup>42</sup> The hierarchical association between foreigners and the Chinese in Shanghai reinforced the impression of a fragmented entity.

Many wealthy Chinese businessmen lived in comfortable homes with gardens... [and] had social contact with the foreigners and shared their business interests, which was to make sure that a reliable source of labor was available to work in their factories and on the docks, and that the social amenities revolving around their lavish clubs and the racecourse were not distributed.<sup>43</sup>

Quantitatively, contrary to the claim by Sinologist Marie-Claire Bergère, Shanghai as a Treaty Port was *used* to extracting profits for foreign trades; primarily those of the British. The Bund at the time was, perhaps, the only intentional linear waterfront skyline in the world. Its dazzling image successfully imitated and was favorably compared with Manhattan's skyline and it definitely trumped the image of Paris in the same period.



Figure 5: Paris Waterfront in the 1900s. Photograph: Visual Shanghai Project

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<sup>43</sup> Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990): 348-354

The Bund skyline exemplified the prevailing condition of Shanghai's identity, which was not made up of the original inhabitants, but by outsiders, who asserted their superiority. The "key" to modern China, Shanghai accommodated city dwellers that were proud of calling themselves "Shanghainese" regardless of their original birthplaces.<sup>44</sup>

Although the building of the Bund was only partly planned, several buildings were also hastily added to the corridor after the success of the previous buildings, the "sense of a whole" limited by necessity. The image of Shanghai embraced people's understanding of their own identity as supported by hybrid cultural infrastructure mediated through built form. In other words, the cultural resistance was mitigated by the idea of Shanghai as a "melting pot." Shanghai's built cultural infrastructure represented different cultural norms favoring strategies that would enhance the image of a world metropolis. To a degree, the use of architecture in the city as a collective picturesque "billboard" that attracted global attention emphasizing the fact that Shanghai had never *fully* been a Chinese city.

The unprecedented economic progress gave birth to such things as the "Chinese bourgeoisie" was, alas, short-lived. It did not lead to an industrial revolution; otherwise, Shanghai today might be different.<sup>45</sup> The Bund was a historic record of the semi-colonial

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<sup>44</sup> This diversified ethnicity made Shanghai the Manhattan of China, echoing the fact that Manhattan in its early days was the land of refugees who traveled thousands of miles for opportunity in the metropolis.

<sup>45</sup> Bergère, *Golden Age*

period in China and “the architectural interaction between the Eastern and Western cultures.”<sup>46</sup>



Figure 6: *Above* Skyline of Manhattan Waterfront in the early 1900s, compared to *Below* The Bund Skyline in the same period. Photograph: Shanghai Archives & Visual Shanghai

### **Shanghai and China**

After the Qing were overthrown by the military force of Sun Yat Sen and succeeded by the Republic of China in 1912, China’s politics went into turmoil.<sup>47</sup> Sun Yat Sen resided in Shanghai for six years from 1918 to 1924 to secure the city, which, as his financial base was crucial to his provisional government and the newly established Kuomintang (KMT) party. In 1927, the committee appointed by the Shanghai Municipality and President Sun Yat Sen produced a semi-official plan for the city, which

<sup>46</sup> Zhang, *From West*, 93

<sup>47</sup> It was a time when nothing was certain and the country was closely watched by its unfriendly neighbors, ready to exploit any weakness. Shanghai did not suffer any major effect from this political shift.

focused on the urban development of the northeast district as an extension of the existing urbanized international concessions.<sup>48</sup> The proposal forced the population of the downtown Puxi area to be dispersed onto the west bank of the Huangpu in order to avoid the overcongestion of the business center and the collapse of the city's outdated infrastructure.<sup>49</sup> This "Metropolitan Plan for Shanghai," however, remained on paper due to the war against Japan.

In 1929, the Nationalist government decided that it wanted to reconsider the idea of a master plan for Shanghai – a plan that would create a modern industry and “diminish the power and the presence of foreign enclaves.”<sup>50</sup> The idea was not new, rather, it revisited Sun Yat Sen's Metropolitan Plan for Shanghai, which extended toward the east side of Huangpu River, Pudong – the area remained untouched by any development.<sup>51</sup> The primary objective of this extension was to “build a metropolis that would be large and modern, both in its structure and function, to reestablish Shanghai the Great Port of the East.”<sup>52</sup> Dong Dayou, a Chinese architect trained in a prevailing Beaux-Art style architecture, was recruited by the KMT government to accomplish this task. Dong proved to be the perfect man for the job, not only through his extensive neo-

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<sup>48</sup> Ning Yuemin, “City Planning and Urban Construction in the Shanghai Metropolitan Area,” in *The Dragon's Head: Shanghai, China's Emerging Megacity*, eds. Harold D. Foster, David Chuenyan Lai, and Naisheng Zhou, *Canadian Western Geographical Series 34* (Victoria, Canada: Western Geographical Press, 1999): 229, and K.L. MacPherson, “Designing China's Urban Future: the Greater Shanghai Plan, 1927-1937,” *Planning Perspectives* 5 (1990): 39-62

<sup>49</sup> Chan, *Shanghai Pudong*, 51

<sup>50</sup> Alan Balfour, “Twin Cities,” in Balfour, *Shanghai*, 75

<sup>51</sup> During the time when the Nationalist government used Nanjing as a political capital, Shanghai was being considered economically because of its trading ports.

<sup>52</sup> Christian Henriot, *Shanghai, 1927-1937: Municipal Power, Locality, and Modernization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 75

classical architectural projects in Shanghai but also his bonded connection with prominent influential architectural firms which gave him essential access to the political core.



Figure 7: Dong Dayou's Plan for Shanghai Civic Center, 1929. Image: Shanghai Archives

The dominant trends, derived from the educational institutions from which the first generation of modern Chinese architects graduated from abroad, did not have any competing choices.<sup>53</sup> Assimilation had already dictated the trend of neo-classical style with advanced construction technology. While a northern city like Beijing was partial to the so-called “adaptive architecture” of American architect Henry Murphy, Shanghai

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<sup>53</sup> Dong went to University of Minnesota and Columbia University. Most of the first-generation Chinese architects went to the University of Pennsylvania and studied under the Beaux-Art direction of Paul P. Cret, such as Liang Sicheng, Lin Huiyin, and Yang Tingbao.



and the southern cities still favored eclecticism, a foreign style, which had become “intrinsically” traditional for urban Shanghai in the 1930s. The KMT leaders’ ambition to expand the city to Pudong, notwithstanding the massive cost resulted in a constraint on the project by the financial instability of the Nationalists. Dong, now working for Chiang, relied on the civic design of Puxi’s already constructed infrastructure as he proposed the northern axial expansion.

Dong’s plan embraces several “city beautiful elements,” such as symmetrical axial planning, grand boulevards, open green spaces, an obelisk monument in the center, and classical buildings of a uniform height. However, it represented a shift in the way the “city” was perceived, from being a portrait of commercial power, like Manhattan, to institutional power, like Washington D.C. That is, while the Bund was maintained as a commercial corridor in the south, the new governmental district would be located in the north. Despite the fact that the civic plan for Shanghai was completed, it was not implemented due to the course of the second Sino-Japanese War, resulting in the Japanese occupation from 1937-45.

There were two other important events that substantially impacted the development of the city after the glorified period of the 1930s: World War II and the founding of the People’s Republic of China (P.R.C.). While World War II introduced Japanese control into the cosmopolitan and the hybridized equation, the founding of the P.R.C. and the subsequent strict control of the Communist party delayed the re-organization of the city’s economic system.

## **Shanghai under the Sun: The Modernist Dream**

The subsequent Japanese occupation during 1937-1945 brought about one of the most ambitious plans for Pudong to turn Shanghai into the East Axis' capitol, resembling the ambition Adolph Hitler had for Berlin.<sup>54</sup> The Nationalist government crumbled under Japan's threat of military invasion, as did their political holds over the city. Under Japanese control, Shanghai was used not only as an instrument of the imperial army, but also as an economic engine of "strategic importance": the goal for anyone wishing to take control of Shanghai.<sup>55</sup> Despite its constant "secret" support for both the KMT and the Communist armies, Shanghai continued to operate under absolute Japanese occupation, making considerable profit for their new regime under the Japanese's practice of business monopoly.<sup>56</sup> Japanese architects and planners quickly developed several plans for Shanghai. The most provocative of these plans was by Kunio Maekawa, a Japanese Modernist who had worked in Le Corbusier's atelier. Pudong was conceived by Maekawa as an ideal ground for the extension of a continuous Modernist super grid extending from Puxi.

Not only would Maekawa's East-West monumental axis wipe out the existing lilong fabric, but it would also create a continuous linear plaza, unprecedented in its scale,

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<sup>54</sup> Hitler hired Albert Speer to design the new city that embraces a series of monumental buildings and boulevards. See Frederic Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* (New York: Overlook Press, 2003)

<sup>55</sup> "Shanghai [under the Japanese occupation] would become a central instrument of Japan's "Asian Co-prosperity Sphere." See Alan Balfour, "Japanese Occupation," in Balfour, *Shanghai*, 101.

<sup>56</sup> Alan K. Lathop, review of *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Shanghai under Japanese Occupation*, by Christian Henriot and Wen-Hsin, eds., *China Information* 19, no. 521 (2005): 521-3

across Huangpu connecting the two shores. In this plan, every building on the Bund in the path of this Modernist ceremonial mall would be removed to make way for the continuation of the dominant axis Maekawa drew from Nanjing Road. The connection between the two shores was articulated through the vast and monumental scale of the waterfront landscapes. “The plan is immediately reminiscent of Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City,” Alan Balfour observes.<sup>57</sup> In actuality, had this been built, the unparalleled scale of this public space would have surpassed Tiananmen Square by at least threefold.

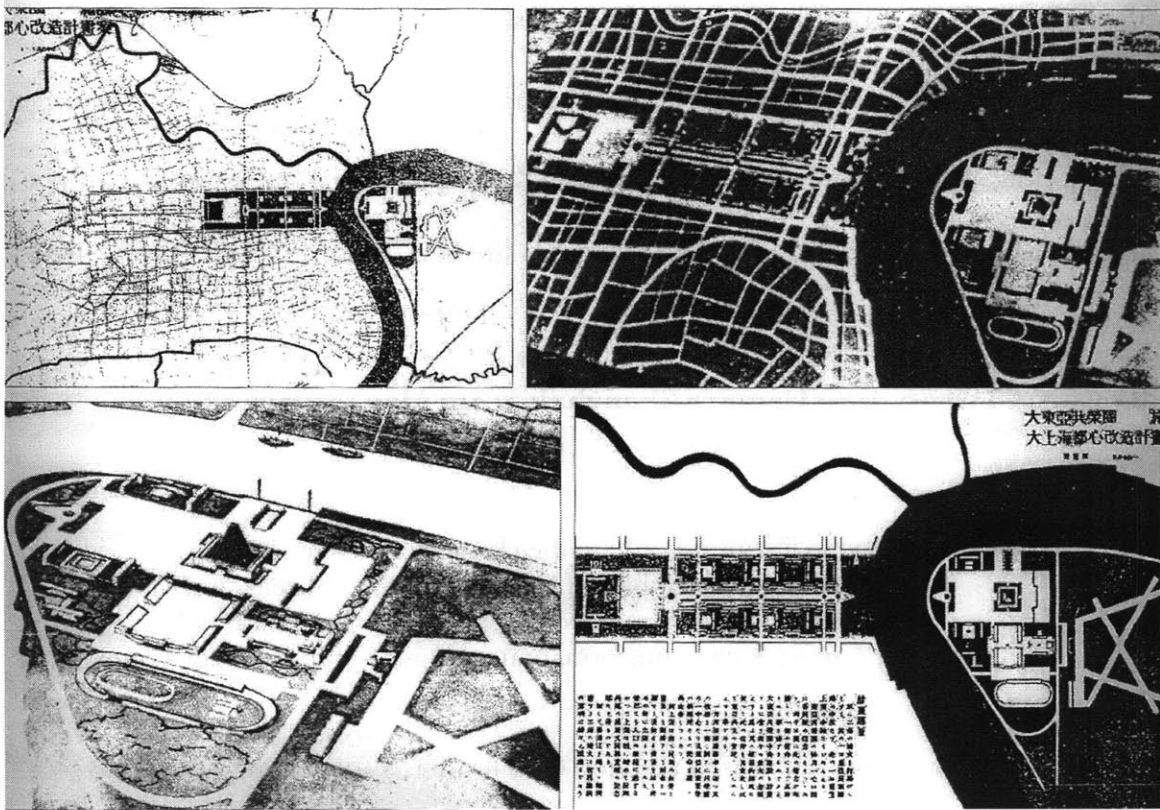


Figure 8: Kuno Maekawa's Plan for Pudong, 1942. Image: Shanghai Archives

<sup>57</sup> Balfour, *Shanghai*, 98-105

Across the river on the Pudong side, Maekawa placed a colossal pyramid at the center of a public park used to serve multiple recreational, civic, and ceremonial purposes. For Maekawa, as it was for other Modernists, only unparalleled monumentality could resurrect the city from the Chinese and colonial past, which was to be forgotten and replaced by the new Japanese future. Maekawa's plan for Shanghai was the eradication of yesterday, particularly though the demolition of the Bund.

The dropping of the atomic bombs in August 1945 ended the Modernist dream of the Japanese. The surrender of Japan in August 1945 brought World War Two to a close, and freed China from the governance of the Japanese Empire. The KMT returned to power again for only a few years before Mao Zedong and his Communist Party of the north marched down to Shanghai and overthrew the KMT government in 1949.

### **Towards Twenty-first Century Shanghai: From Mao to Deng**

As the city came to life in response to the challenge of Deng Xiaoping in the late 1980s, the inspiration was Manhattan...[Deng, by ways of central government and local authority,] carefully cultivated propaganda by the authorities, preparing the people for a spectacular transformation – a mission for the modern city.<sup>58</sup>

Shanghai under Mao was in a period of transition. Mao Zedong's *Great Leap Forward* and *Cultural Revolution* both greatly constrained the way in which the market economy developed during this time.<sup>59</sup> The so-called "adaptive Marxist-Leninist socialist economy," whose aim to achieve social equality operated through the absolute control of

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<sup>58</sup> Alan Balfour, "The Communist City" in Balfour, *Shanghai*, 109

<sup>59</sup> Phillip Short, *Mao: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999)

labor and products, brought about the most negative change in the social structure of Shanghai. Similar to other socialist cities, the differentiation between social classes was reduced due to the leveling of consumption patterns and lifestyle imposed by the socialist government. The number of agricultural enterprises was minimized and Shanghai became a true “industrial powerhouse.” Spurred on by Mao’s famous quote, “I want to see smokestacks everywhere,” heavy manufacturing industry became the dominant means of production in the Maoist era. The shift from a free-market capitalist economy to a socialist economy brought about the decline of Shanghai.

After the Communists took over the city under the founding of the PRC, Mao announced that Shanghai would be “central to the socialist economy”;<sup>60</sup> in a sense modifying Shanghai to become the model of the appropriate socially economic Chinese city, despite the well-established capitalist economy typical to most treaty port cities at the time. The liberation of this semi-colonial city involved merging the French concession and the international settlements. The foreigners and their extraterritoriality status were lifted from Shanghai. Action had to be taken against moral decay, such as prostitution and mob violence, as moralization was mandatory to the socialist economic system. The Communist Party was embarrassed by the thriving trades, which went against everything it stood for.

The new socialist economy re-structured the entire business circuit in the city, transferring from the private to public hands. The collective work unit system or *danwei* (literally means “working commune”) was introduced and Shanghai’s industrial status

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<sup>60</sup> Gambe, *Transition*, 8

became synonymous with many cities in China – “with thousands of smoke stacks.” Mao’s view of Shanghai revolved around the issue of consumption and colonialism as “evil and corrupting,” and thus in need of redirection towards “city of production.”<sup>61</sup> The direct outcome of this reformist ambition was the 1953 Soviet-influenced master plan, which focused predominantly on workers’ housing, railway planning, and the basic form of administration centers. These were the basic elements of the new “socialist city.” China under Mao’s direction aimed for economic self-reliance in light of its substantial human resources. Mao’s reform required a dramatic redeployment of resources with significant consequences for Shanghai. This included the centralization of political power in Beijing; the government’s policy of economic dependence; China’s diplomatic isolation vis-à-vis the West and relative closure to foreign trade; and the lack of significant investment in Shanghai.<sup>62</sup>

Buildings on the Bund were thus allowed to deteriorate. After the victory of Chinese Communism, “foreigners and wealthy Chinese fled, the drug trade and nightlife vanished, and the Paris of the East became a depressed industrial city forgotten by the world.”<sup>63</sup> Though the city itself did not produce much profit, the newly nationalized industries created an unprecedented financial flow within Chinese circle. Despite rigid Communist control, Shanghai still contributed the largest revenue in the country to the central government. Mao’s socialist views focused on social structuring through the

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<sup>61</sup> Duanfang Lu, *Remaking Chinese Urban Form: Modernity, Scarcity, and Space: 1949-2005* (London: Routledge, 2006): 82-3, and Richard Gaulton, "Political Mobilization in Shanghai, 1949-1951." in *Shanghai: Revolution and Development in an Asian Metropolis*, Christopher Howe, ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press): 46

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Gandelsonas, *Reflections*, 22-8

diminishing of class conflict, making the physical planning of the city secondary. There was, however, a plan to make a part of Pudong a riverside park.<sup>64</sup> This plan, however, died with Mao in 1979 and the passing of the control of China to Deng Xiaoping, who would play a critical role in the development of Shanghai in his own right.

### **Open Door Policy: Shanghai as the Dragon's Head**

Deng Xiaoping's era-defining "Open Door Policy" of the 1980s is pivotal to the birth of the new Shanghai.<sup>65</sup> The shift from self-reliance, which had been China's policy for thousands of years, to the "new" policy that did not restrict the admission of foreign imports was the manifestation of the leap towards capitalism – *global capitalism* to be precise – boosting the long-struggling process of Chinese modernization from the end of the Opium Wars.<sup>66</sup> The policy's key strategy was the establishment of special development zones, which originally did not include Shanghai. In 1984, however, through a long and intricate process of lobbying among the country's top leaders, Shanghai was given special status as part of the fourteen coastal cities designated to

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<sup>64</sup> Marshall, *Emerging*, 93

<sup>65</sup> Due to a handful of interpretations on the actual meaning of the Open Door Policy, this thesis follows that of the *Modern China: Encyclopedia of History, Culture, and Nationalism*, which reads: "a collective foreign effort to maintain access to China's fabled markets... [the kind of policy has been favored by many giants such as United States and Great Britain. However,] it had conflicting implications for Chinese nationalism. On one hand, it aimed to prevent the dismemberment of a weak China by aggressive foreign powers and to maintain respect for China's territorial and administrative entity or integrity, the terms generally used to refer to China's sovereignty." Wang Ke-Wen, ed. *Modern China: Encyclopedia of History, Culture, and Nationalism* (New York: Garland, 1998): 250

<sup>66</sup> Yehua Dennis Wei and Chi Kin Leung, "Development Zone, Foreign Investment, and Global City Formation in Shanghai," *Growth and Change*, vol. 36 (1, Winter 2005): 17

encourage capital flow through business transactions.<sup>67</sup> The quantitative success of the early days of the Open Door Policy produced enormous profits for China, making it possible for Shanghai to become a bastion for both industrial and service-sector business. Massive amounts of funding for both short- and long-term infrastructural improvements were given to Shanghai from the early 1990s onward. According to Richard Marshall, “Shanghai invested three times more in its urban infrastructure [over the] last five years than the total invested in the previous forty.”<sup>68</sup> The “1984 Master plan,” initiated by Former Mayor Jiang Zemin, compellingly set comprehensive guidelines for both the redevelopment of the central city, and the establishment of satellite towns. Yet the plan did not immediately receive the substantial support from the central government essential to its implementation. The plan waited almost six years for significant attention from the President himself.

### **Shanghai 2000: Lujiazui**

Due to foreign attention in the opening of this jewel of the Far East, the return of foreign investment to Shanghai quickly matched and surpassed its old days. The Bund, although not reclaiming its past status, had been partially revived and used as headquarters for foreign financial institutions whose aims were to set up their new business base in the East. Neo-classical buildings on The Bund were revitalized to support service-sector business. The demand for space, however, had increased drastically and

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<sup>67</sup> Yawei Chen elaborates the lobbying process, which involved not only the President of the P.R. China (at the time was Yang Shangkun), but also the Premier Li Peng, and several top officials. Interested readers can look into these details. See Chen, *Shanghai Pudong*, 54-65

<sup>68</sup> Marshall, *Emerging*, 88



become extremely high by the mid 1980s increasing several fold beyond the capacity of this poorly maintained commercial corridor, and thus requiring either a significant upgrade or else an expansion of Shanghai's financial district. Econometricist Gregory Chow remarks on the growth in the GDP of China, which has been extraordinary from the outset of the reform:

What accounts for China's success is the way in which the Chinese government adopted institutions and policies that enable the resourceful Chinese people and foreign "friends" to unleash their energy to develop the Chinese economy...the secret of success of China's economic reform is that it allows the non-state sectors to develop in the setting of a market economy.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Gregory C. Chow, "China's Economic Reform and Policies at the Beginning of the Twentieth-First Century," Speech presented at the Fourth International Investment Forum, 8 September 2000. See also, He also comments that "[t]he rapid economic growth of Shanghai since the early 1900s is the most spectacular phenomenon in city development in history." See Gregory C. Chow, *Knowing China* (Singapore: World Scientific: 2004): 183

Likewise, I rely my definition of "economic transformation" in the Chinese context on Professor Chow's account. For details, see Gregory C. Chow, *China's Economic Transformation* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002)



Figure 9: Key Development Zones in Shanghai. Map: Cambridge University Press

Around the end of the 1980s, the dream of extending Shanghai across the river to Lujiazui was again brought to public awareness by the Shanghai Urban Planning and

Design Institute.<sup>70</sup> It was not yet seriously considered, however, because of the institute's lack of political clout. Central to the materialization of the plan was Deng's visit to Shanghai in 1990. Not only did he urge the municipal government to think about the expansion of the city in order to accommodate the anticipated demand for space due to the increasing population, but he also encouraged the authority to consider "commodifying" the empty land across from the Huangpu. Followed by the visit was his consequential speech:

Shanghai was China's financial center where people freely engaged in business. It should continue to serve as *the* center in order to attain an international seat in banking. [As] finance is the heart of modern [Chinese] economy; Shanghai will be the most important city to win for [China's] world position in the [economic] field. China must rely on Shanghai<sup>71</sup>

Answering Deng's call was Zhu Rongji, nicknamed the "Smashing Mayor" for his uncompromising acts in order to establish worthy collaborations.<sup>72</sup> Risking his political creditability in pursuit of his ultimate goal of attaining position as China's Premier, Zhu looked to François Mitterrand's *Grand Projets* as a model for the new Shanghai. The French influence comes not only from the pre-existing cultural influence dating back to the Golden Age period, but also the good political relationships, and the successful demonstration of power through architecture and urban form of France's capital city.<sup>73</sup> Zhu, however, envisioned a plan that was beyond Mitterrand's imagination: to build the

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 93

<sup>71</sup> "Shanghai Lujiazui Finance & Trade Zone Development Company," advertising brochure, 1994, as cited in Chia-Liang Tai, "Transforming Shanghai: The Redevelopment Context of the Pudong New Area" (M.Sc. thesis, Columbia University, 2005), 5, and Sean Kennedy, "Beijing Sheds some Weight," *The Banker* (March 1995), 48, as cited in *ibid.*, 22

<sup>72</sup> Robert Lawrence Kuhn, *Made in China: Voices from the New Revolution* (New York: TV Books, 2000): 252-3, and Lee Khoon Choy. *Pioneers of Modern China: Understanding the Inscrutable Chinese* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2005), 140-4

<sup>73</sup> Chen, *Shanghai Pudong*, 66-7

“New Shanghai” on the opposite shore of the Huangpu River. He organized an international competition for the Pudong area’s master plan in 1993, his final year in office. Due in large part to his popularity gained from the “Pudong phenomenon,” Zhu later succeeded in achieving his political ambition and became the Premier of China.<sup>74</sup>

The strategy Zhu employed is a classic example of global-city formation and the infusion of foreign investment. He took advantage of Shanghai’s strategic position from previous treaties and its location as the dragon’s head. Shanghai took out substantial foreign loans to invest in massive infrastructure projects as a way to attract foreign speculation – providing an international platform for financial exchange. This was expected to feed money back into the system by fast business turnover. The formation of Pudong slowed down the demolition of Shanghai’s architectural heritage take place since the opening of the country to the global market.

At the core of the Open Door Policy was the attraction of foreign investment. The city’s new job would be to bring back the foreigners who left Shanghai during the turmoil around the founding of the People’s Republic of China. The appearance of Lujiazui, for Zhu, was biased towards emulating Western cities, especially in the presence of high-rise towers and monumental boulevards. With financial deals prepared for by the former Mayor Jiang, Zhu promulgated his design for the city to be “a metropolis equal to New York and London,” aiming at taking the city to its Golden Age. This included prodigious infrastructure construction such as new traffic networks, sources of energy, urban water

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<sup>74</sup> Zhu later defined another new era of contemporary economic reform by gaining China’s membership to the World Trade Organization (WTO). He was also the Dean of the Tsinghua University’s School of Economics and Commerce in Beijing.

facilities, and telecommunication projects.<sup>75</sup> He forcefully put forward the city's development plan under the specific *agenda*: to be the "Oriental Manhattan...to become an international metropolis of the 21<sup>st</sup> century."<sup>76</sup> In 1994, setting the stage for the unprecedented development of Shanghai, the government-sponsored international conference on the strategic planning of Pudong highlighted six ambitious objectives as outlined in "Shanghai, Towards the Twentieth-First Century: A Research Report on Economic and Special Development Strategy":

To utilize the 6,300 square kilometer of multi-function megalopolis; to achieve a GDP of RMB150,000 per capita with the expected growth rate of 11.4%; to transform Pudong into a tertiary-oriented economy with an emphasis on finance, trade, and the service sector, to achieve the population of 14 million; to restructure urban land use with a five square kilometer Lujiazui and; to astronomically develop the new infrastructure for Pudong, including the new airport and extensive highways.<sup>77</sup>

As observed in the early development of the Bund, the nature of assimilating skylines of Western metropolises is embedded in the tradition of Shanghai from its early days.

In order to make sense of Shanghai's urban form, we must understand urbanism of the city from both ideological and physical perspectives. In the ideological perspective, the next section explores the controversy over the international competition for Lujiazui in the 1990s, attempting to unpack the politics, and revealing pre-conceived ideas that underlie "pragmatic nationalism."

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<sup>75</sup> Chao Zhang, "Geographical Construction in the Pudong New Area" in Foster, *Dragon's Head*, 275-8

<sup>76</sup> City of Future, *Shanghai Star* (2 July 1993, front-page headline) as cited in Jos Gamble, *Shanghai in Transition: Changing Perspectives and Social Contours of a Chinese Metropolis* (London, Routledge: 2003): 10

<sup>77</sup> Yuemin, *City Planning*, 243-5

### **The Idealized Urban Form: The Making of Lujiazui**

Underlying the selection of Lujiazui's master plan, the politics of the *conceived* urban form became the reality of Shanghai today. The sense of nationalism embedded in the political interventions sparked a dramatic dialogue between the certainty of the situation and the fabricated dream of the authority.<sup>78</sup> The planning of Lujiazui offers a portrayal of Chinese nationalism in response to changes in the country's international circumstances.<sup>79</sup> While patriotism is mandatory to regain esteem from several decades of decay, the connection to the rest of the world via cultural transactions and foreign policy is a complex weave. That is, there is a tension between nationalism and "globalization," which Shanghai must negotiate.<sup>80</sup> The distancing of Shanghai's image from being China through the making of new urban forms was a bold national strategy and an international maneuver. Globalization is a reciprocal product of this particular kind of nationalism. In contrast to Shanghai in the 1930s, which was prosperity-driven, the integration of

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<sup>78</sup> I would like to note that nationalism did not exist before the nineteenth century when China was still an empire. Chinese political elites begin to embrace modern nationalist doctrines for China's defense and regeneration only after China's disastrous defeat...in the 1840-1842 Opium War. The result of today's Chinese Communist party's process of building a nation-state to assure vital national interests is "pragmatic nationalism." Its consideration of the nation as a territorial-political unit gives the Communist state the responsibility to speak in the name of the nation and demands that citizens subordinate their individual interest to China's national ones. See Suisheng Zhao, "China's Pragmatic Nationalism: Is it Managable?" *The Washington Quarterly* (29; Winter 2005-06): 131-44

<sup>79</sup> Christopher R. Huges, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era* (London: Routledge, 2006): 2-5

<sup>80</sup> I rely on the definition of "globalization" as multi-national phenomenon, which involves highly complex interaction between varieties of social institutes across geographical scales establishing a vast landscape of urban network. See Saskia Sassen, "Identity in the Global City, Economic and Cultural Encasements," in Patricia Yaeger, ed. *The Geography of Identity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996)

Shanghai into the true international community and the world system of economy is an approach to modernizing China as a whole.

In the early 1990s, Zhu Rongji, the Mayor of Shanghai, began his quest for the new Shanghai by seeking consultation from the *Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région d'Ile de France* in Paris. The result was the international competition for Lujiazui in 1993. Taking into account an uncommonly *loose* program, roughly calling for the development of four million square meters of commercial space of the “twenty-first century city,” the assumption that this was just an “ideas competition” is persuasive. The given “aim” was simply inclusive:

To develop Pudong as a modern district with a rational development structure, an efficient public transportation system, comprehensive urban infrastructure, a rapid telecommunication system and a sustainable natural environment.<sup>81</sup>

The only given existing condition was the Oriental Pearl TV Tower at the tip of the shore, and the planned International airport at the southwest corner of Pudong district. Among the top architectural firms that Zhu invited to compete, Richard Rogers, Toyo Ito, Massimiliano Fuksas, and Dominique Perrault were the four teams that actually submitted proposals. Rogers’ radial compact-city plan stood out as the easiest to comprehend because of its forceful formalistic architectural quality, which “can be appreciated as a singular object,” Marshall comments.<sup>82</sup>

Notwithstanding the arresting gesture, the scheme represented Rogers’s considerable attention to the neighborhood-scale urban quality, not just monumentality

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<sup>81</sup> Chen, *Shanghai Pudong*, 59

<sup>82</sup> Marshall, *Focal Point*, 94

of the high-rise city. The connection to the Bund as the relevant precedent for envisioning Pudong was explicit. Roger wrote: “while the historic Bund gave Shanghai a world famous skyline...it is on a nineteenth century scale. Lujiazui will relate to it, but will be larger, on a scale appropriate to a city of the twenty-first century.”<sup>83</sup> The quality of urban form in Roger’s plan is phenomenal. Roger’s conceptualized the urbanism of Shanghai through architectural-urbanist lenses. The plan proposed a series of compound high-rise buildings, mixed with the low-rise multi-function buildings clustered around a central open space. The vehicular loop that spans in a circle across the project, serving as a “tube” circulating people from a street level to the building level, connects the cluster to the larger public space outside the center business district, and to the international airport. Through a series of functional vertical arrangements of the large infrastructural platform, Rogers’s plan separated people and automobile, making the central business district an ideal car-free environment. The central open space recalls Manhattan’s *Central Park*, as a significant recreational ground.

While the plan received enormous praise for its sensible planning creativity, it was unavoidable that it would be criticized for its difficult implementation. Kris Olds wrote: “[it] was pure paper architecture; an ideal city expressive of the modernist ecotopia...No master plan of such complexity and technological sophistication could ever be implemented in the messy and frenzied context of Shanghai...[,that is,] the plan was pure theory.”<sup>84</sup> Olds makes an interesting observation. However, given Shanghai’s politics in the 1990s, the claim that Roger’s scheme was too expensive is secondary. The

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<sup>83</sup> Richard Rogers as cited in Kris Olds, *Globalization and Urban Change: Capital, Culture, and Pacific Rim Mega-Projects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 224-5

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 229



subsequent history of Lujiazui's demonstrate an ambition to generate the global billboard by virtue of architectural-urban expression that took immediate precedence over economic rationality. To a degree, I agree with Olds, especially considering the extreme confinement of formalistic urban form, which might fail to accommodate the flexibility of Chinese cultural dynamism. The urban form of Puxi consists of both planned and ad hoc urban development; the integrity and identity of urban form has grown naturally out of cultural and utilitarian responses to the physical form of the city. Rogers' plan imposes a rigidity that deviates such adaptive development over time.

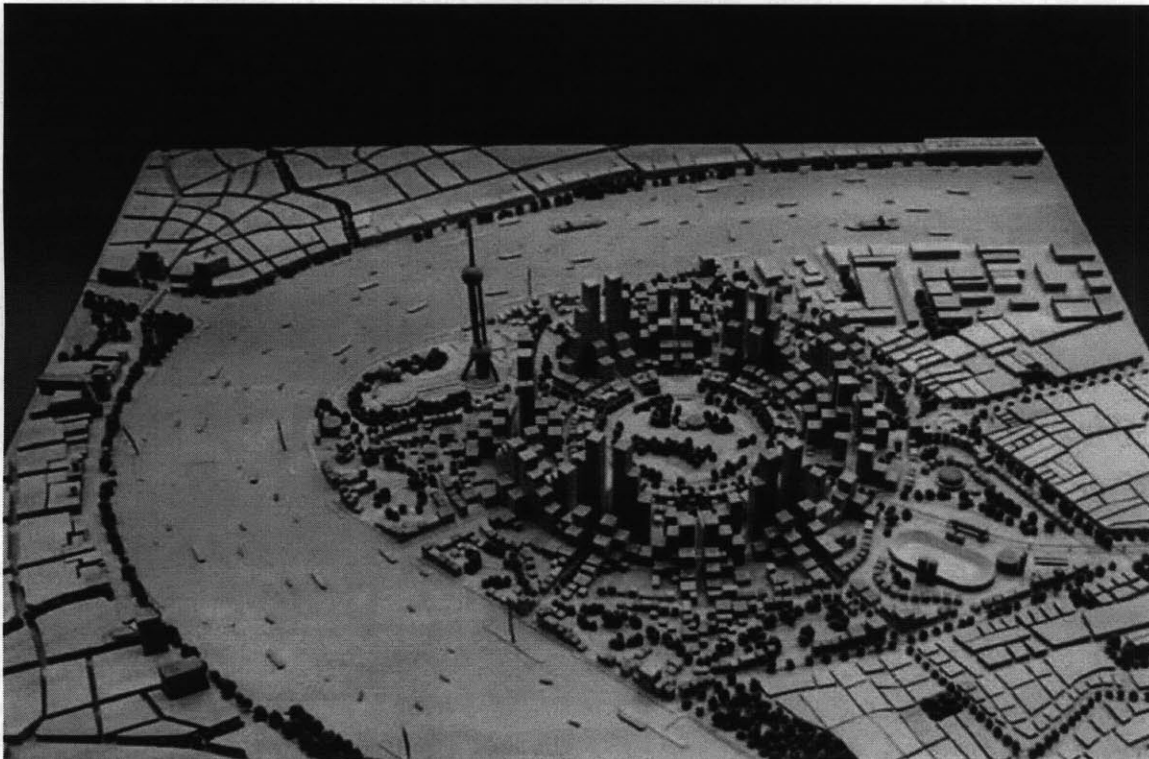


Figure 10: Richard Rogers and Partner's plan for Pudong, 1993. Photograph: Shanghai Municipal Government

Although Rogers' plan was widely complimented, the competition judges favored to incline to Perrault's scheme, which encompasses a series of high-rise buildings along

the north and south sides of the shore, creating perpendicular corridors of heterogeneous skyscrapers. One could easily relate the expression of this wall of high-rise building along the waterfront corridor to the Bund. Despite the fact that Ito's and Fuksas's plans were challenging and *avant-garde* in their emphasis on programming urban form and blurring the boundary between object and space, the abstraction and conceptual gestures of both plans failed to draw the attention of the judges and were not discussed as much as Rogers' and Perrault's.

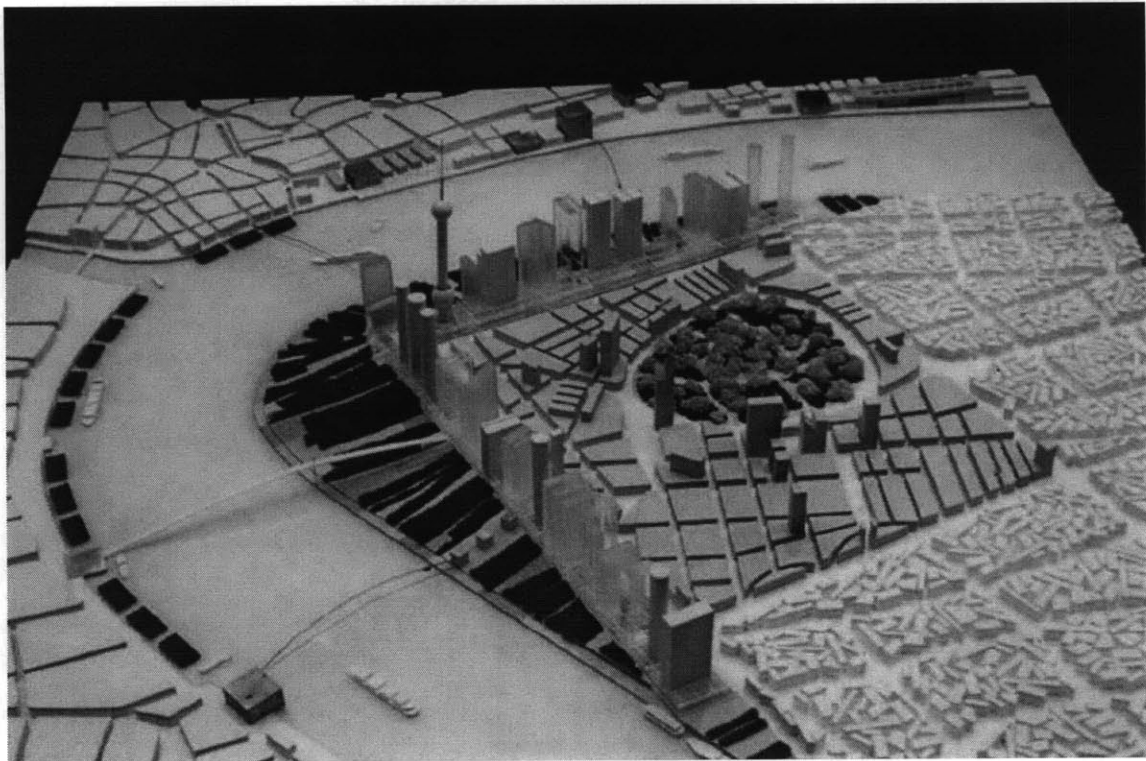


Figure 11: Dominique Perrault's Plan for Lujiazui, 1993. Photograph: Shanghai Municipal Government

In the end, the juries made an anomalous decision. They picked the “Chinese team's” plan – the least complicated plan proposed by the Shanghai Urban Planning and Design Institute. The *de jure* reason for the selection was, as Marshall wrote, “because the

Chinese team presented the superior understanding of the local environment...the scheme was deemed to be politically more acceptable and it was technically easier to implement quickly.”<sup>85</sup> Olds adds: “the Shanghai team is familiar with the site, the program, the means to implement the proposal. The proposal provides the image of a city ambitiously conceived along a central axis which feeds the district while ensuring a large amount of flexibility for future construction.”<sup>86</sup> Not only does the plan fully neglect public participation, but it also embraces a series of urban icons borrowed from notable cities in the West, where they are successful.

The so-called “optimized plan” of the Chinese team encompasses the desired elements taken individually from all four plans, idealizing roughly around Roger’s and Perrault’s schemes, but, according to Rowe, using “functionalist concepts popular in the west in the 1960s and 70s, with a general spatial configuration that incorporated ring and radial roads serving clusters of relatively intense development, with open-space preserves and greenbelts in between.”<sup>87</sup> The central park and the waterfront promenade are highlighted as two major open spaces, claimed by the designers as “the provision for good urbanism,” surrounded and anchored by a series of high-rise buildings. The apparent element that is not drawn from the proposals is the Century Avenue, proposed to appease

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<sup>85</sup> Marshall, *Focal Point*, 100

<sup>86</sup> Olds, *Globalization*, 220

<sup>87</sup> Wang, *Lujiazui*, 11, and Peter G. Rowe, “Advanced Research Seminar: Pudong New Area, Shanghai, China” Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Fall 2003, Course Syllabus. <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/people/faculty/rowe/courses.html> (accessed July 12, 2007). Also, the issue to consider here is whether the plan was “taken” or “stolen.” This brings up an interesting point—that the Chinese did it to get Western expertise without seriously compensating for it. Since all plans were privately held in secret, there is no way of knowing whether the Chinese took the best of the plans submitted and created their own, effectively using them without having to acknowledge the use of them.

the government's aspiration to have a civic element in the "manner of Paris," referring to the eighteenth century *Champs Elysees*, or specifically the program for its extension "Mission Grand Axe" in 1991.<sup>88</sup> The avenue was outsourced to be designed, appropriately, by a French architect Jean-Marie Charpentier. In his master plan, building's heights are not uniformly fixed; thus, high-rise buildings are to be located arbitrarily across the shore with an emphasis on the two sides of Century Avenue.

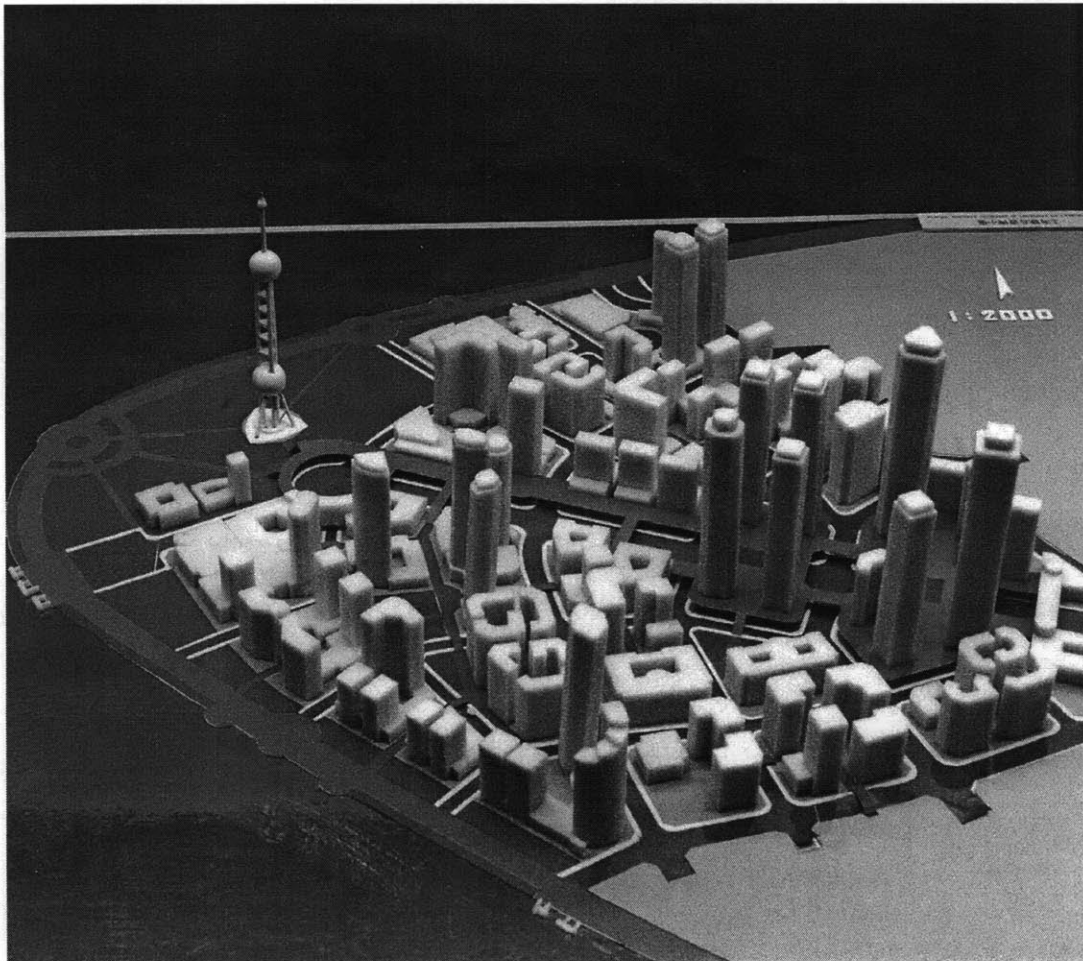


Figure 12: The Proposal by Shanghai Urban Planning Institute. Photograph: Shanghai Planning Museum

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<sup>88</sup> Jorge Otero-Pailos, "Bigness in Context: Some Regressive Tendencies in Rem Koolhaas' Urban Theory." *City* 4 (3, 2000): 379-389.

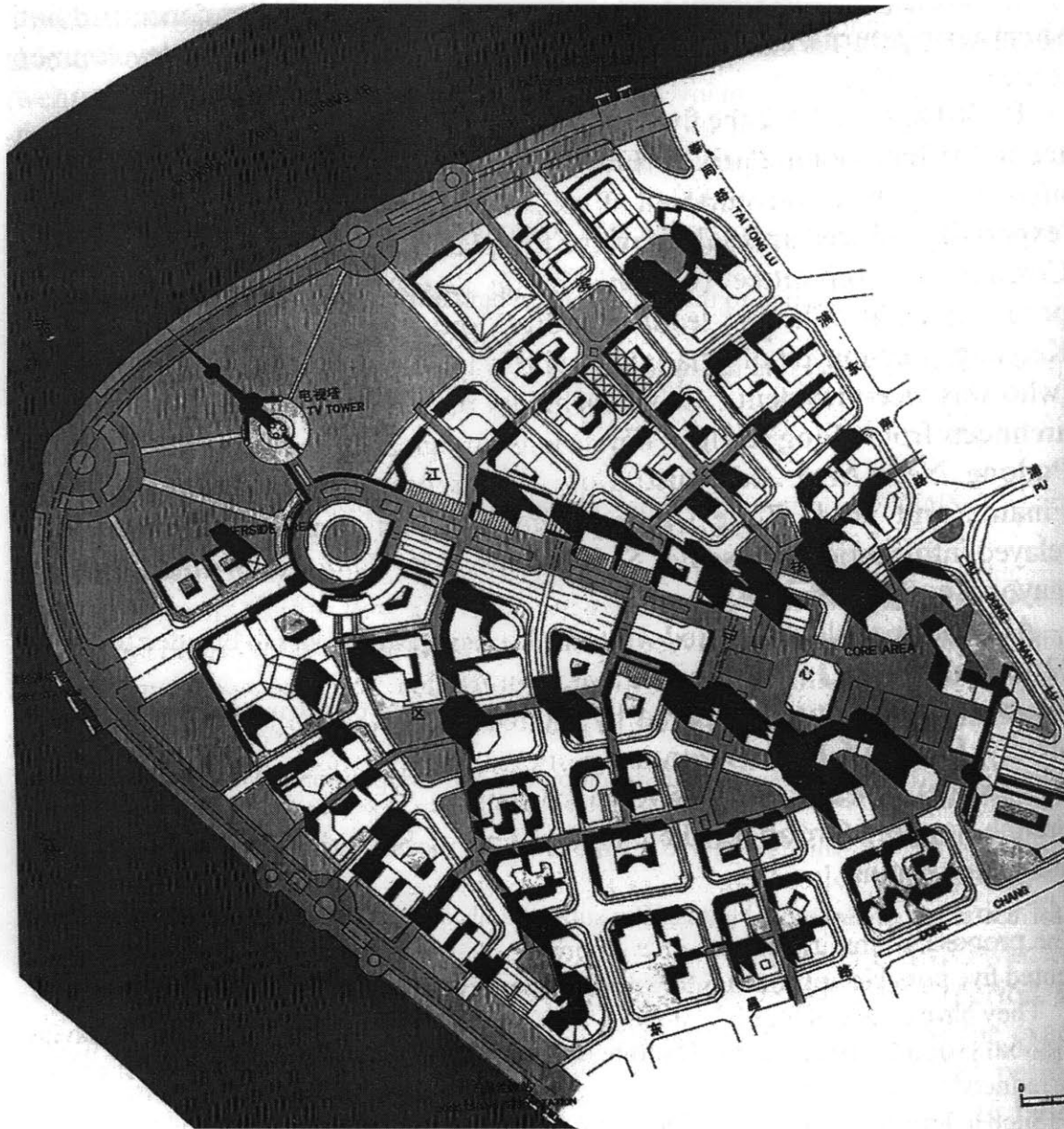


Figure 13: The Proposal by Shanghai Urban Planning Institute. Map: Shanghai Planning Museum

This seemed like Shanghai government hosted a world-class design competition just to use the design of its own designer. If that was the case, why did Zhu Rongji invite the *élite architects* to participate in this setup in the first place? One answer lies in the mentality of Chinese business. The priority for a project is usually given to the instant delivering of the conspicuous product. “[Because] Shanghai's soul is in its openness to

change, its tolerance and its *absolute pragmatism*,” says Architect Ma Qingyun.<sup>89</sup> In other words, tangibility, short-term investment, secured turnover, and practicality are the identification of success, especially in the context of Shanghai’s dynamic growth.<sup>90</sup> Chow comments: “In their own environment of economic institutions, Shanghai people seem to know and are accustomed to their own rules, which have proven to be reliable based on their wealth and success in the last ten years.”<sup>91</sup>

Zhu, a mastermind of China’s global economy, expected Shanghai to gain instantaneous global attention from this “rigged” contest, and intended to immerse Chinese architects in the planning practice internationally in order to broaden their professional horizon.<sup>92</sup> Resonating Fulong Wu’s argument on the influence of globalization on Shanghai’s urban development, the competition created an expected “catalytic effect,” which helped to break the ice for the new milieu of contemporary built form and environment.<sup>93</sup> That is, Zhu substantially succeeded in both ways – no competition in the world was more noted than the Lujiazui in the early 1990s, and truly, the Shanghai Urban Planning Institute had learned a valuable lesson, which they used as a model, and professionally exploited throughout the remaining years of the twentieth century.

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<sup>89</sup> That is, buildings are tangible. They are solid and obviously exist. Chinese pragmatism is based on tangible value. Lim, *Shanghai Urban*

<sup>90</sup> Yung Ho Chang uses the term “critical pragmatism” as a respond to the developing mentality of the Post-Mao era, derived from the key idea “Black Cat, Black White” by Deng Xiaoping. For details, see Yung Ho Chang, “The Necessity of Banality,” *Volume*, 8 (2006): 86-8

<sup>91</sup> Chow, *Knowing*, 186

<sup>92</sup> Olds, *Globalization* 99-101

<sup>93</sup> Fulong Wu, “Globalization, Place Promotion and Urban Development in Shanghai” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 25, no. 1 (2003): 55–78



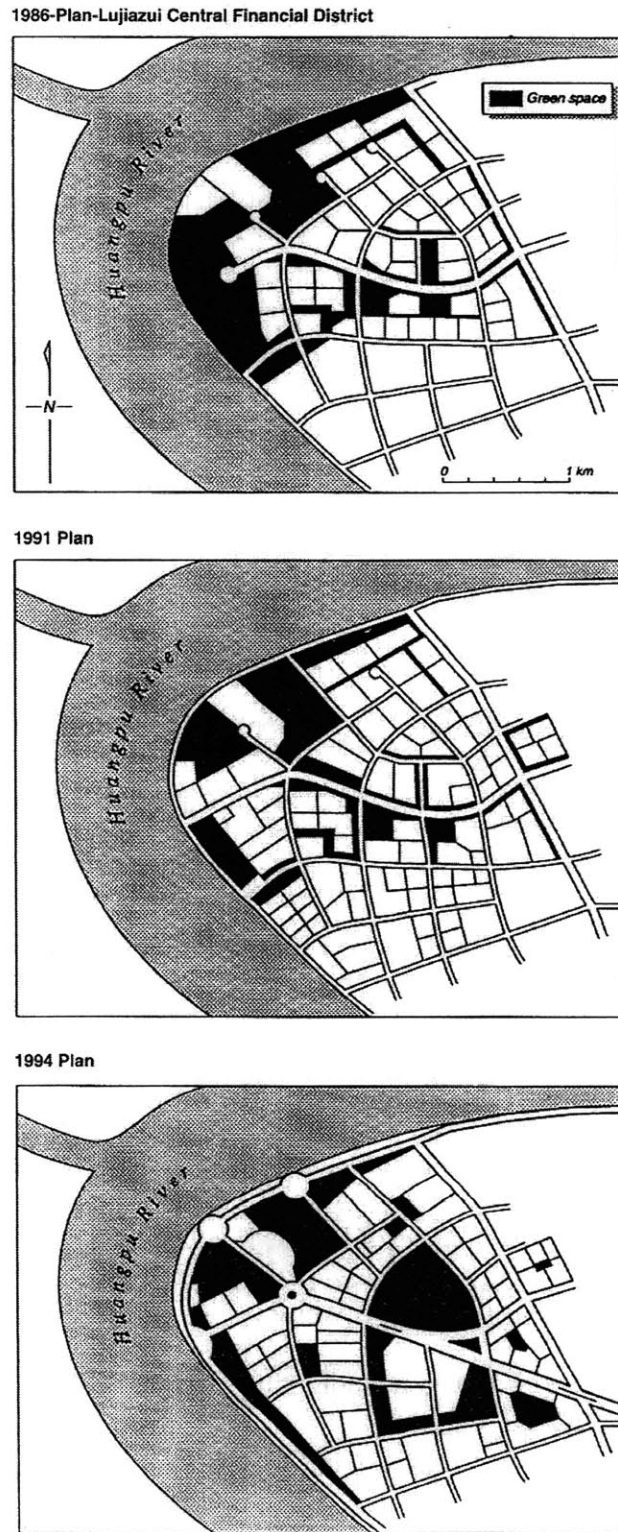


Figure 14: Comparative Urban Structure, 1986, 1991, and 1994 plan respectively. All of which have a monumental boulevard as “the” main urban element. Image: Cambridge University Press

As Shanghai's new financial center, Lujiazui is located at the tip of the Pudong shore with a strong visual connection to the old Puxi. The dialogue between the two shores is not just the interaction between "now and then," but the encounter between the two faces of the city built in two different ways. While the Bund had been eclectically built to become a symbolic façade of Shanghai, Lujiazui was pre-conceived and erected to emulate the impression made from a series of skyscrapers laid across the vast landscape. The expressiveness of urban form lies in its "boldness." American architect Benjamin Wood critically asserts: "Pudong is all about show – it's designed to create plots of land for monuments to corporate power, the global economy."<sup>94</sup> What is considered as an urbanist strategy does not seem to fit the purpose of showing the authority of Shanghai in the contemporary time. Both the Bund and Pudong are case studies of how complicated uses of architecture as visuals in a city re-construct meaning *vis-à-vis* a global narrative.

Despite the fact that the new development of Pudong was given a green light from Beijing, the authorities had not seriously discussed the project for a decade due to the investment risk. This was the case until the era of the Zhu Rongji.<sup>95</sup> Mayor Zhu ambitiously pushed the development of the plan, advocating its accordance with the establishment of the municipal finance and trade company. The new mega-infrastructure has been assigned to the west side of the city in several master plans of Shanghai to support the establishment of Pudong, including the extended subway lines, roads,

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<sup>94</sup> Benjamin Wood, the author of a bustling shopping and entertainment district in Shanghai, is the principal of a successful design firm in Shanghai. See Lim, *Shanghai Urban*

<sup>95</sup> Zhu's goal to demonstrate the massive success of Shanghai in his era later granted him a position as China's Premier. That is to say, Zhu followed the footsteps of his predecessor, Shanghai's former mayor Jiang Zemin who later became the President of the People's Republic of China.



highways, high-speed trains, and a new international airport. As meticulously studied by Kris Olds, Richard Marshall and Peter G. Rowe, the politics of the building of Lujiazui necessitates a replication of the image of the great Western metropolises. This politics is a direct response to the “pragmatic nationalism,” which is evidently immense in the making of new urban space and architectural form.<sup>96</sup>

Whether the reinforcement the pragmatic nationalism using built form and environment fail or succeed, what we have learned is a series of ambitious attempts to communicate certain messages of power to the world at large using visual cultural symbols. The importance of the juxtaposing skylines of the Bund and Pudong is not to be debated, but to be accepted. To understand Shanghai today, given its relationship to its history, the next section will delve further into the city, the heart of the New Shanghai – Lujiazui.

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<sup>96</sup> The condition of nationalism in Shanghai has been evolved from the so-called “ethic nationalism” in the early period of the establishment of the Treaty Port, to a “liberal nationalism” in the founding of the Republic of China in the turn of the century, and to Mao’s “state nationalism,” foreshadowed by the impact of the *Great Leap Forward* policy and the *Cultural Revolution*.

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## Chapter Two

### *Politicization and the Rhetoric of Shanghai Urbanism*

Despite the complete change of the Bund's shoreline, the Bund has remained remarkably intact stylistically. Yet, the time traveler felt the dynamism of diverse modernities at work. The time traveler then made a trip to the Planning museum, where he could see the whole city from a bird's-eye view. He was so shocked when he saw urban form of his city in the "Great Model." The planning staff came to him and gave him two information pamphlets. First reads:

"Shanghai is better and better. The twenty-first century is full of promise. In the new century, we will build Shanghai into the largest economic shipping center in China, placing it in the first rank of historical cultural cities. Furthermore, we will gradually build the city into one of the international central cities of economy, finance and trade: "the global metropolis of the twenty-first century." We firmly believe that with all the efforts that are currently being made by the municipal government and the people of Shanghai, we will be able to carry out our plans and bring all our goals to fruition."<sup>97</sup>

Can Shanghai really be *the* global metropolis of the twenty-first century? The answer to this question lies in how "global metropolis" is defined and what is to be expected from it. According to Saskia Sassen, a global city is "an urban space with new economic and political potentialities, which formulates the transnational identity and communicates...connecting sites that are not geographically proximate yet are intensely connected to each other."<sup>98</sup> By this measure, even without the advanced technologies, Shanghai has *always* been a global city.

The definition of a "global twenty-first century" city, however, is ambiguous, although it can be thought of as a future free-market competition. In this sense, the

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<sup>97</sup> Balfour, *Shanghai*, 148

<sup>98</sup> Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy* (London: Pine Forge Press, 2006): 73

extensive Chinese workforce can also be added to the equation.<sup>99</sup> In order to achieve the goal in a theoretical sense, the development of Shanghai's urbanism corresponds to the parameters of a compact urban place that provides the soft cultural infrastructure. The integrity of "form," or urban identity, is required to establish the tangible perception to which everyone can relate. The result of this process is the making of a cosmopolitan city that can compete in the globalized economic context. The making of Lujiazui's urban form is confined to the idealized notion of hyper-modern urbanity. The international competition of the early 1990s exemplifies the ardent aim to push forward the image of the city.

This chapter discusses the ways Shanghai might be understood through its urbanism. The purpose is to realistically check the actuality of built environment in relation to its history and political presence through first-hand primary sources, which is to fill unanticipated voids that surfaced in the understanding of Shanghai in a physical sense. This can be done from four following perspectives – urban form, individual buildings and urban imagery, visualization of the skylines, and streetscape. Using the city as a primary source, this chapter presents specific information derived from my observations needed to authenticate the research. That is, whereas the history is a cursory look of the city, this chapter presents analytically microcosmic views of the city.

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<sup>99</sup> Jyoti Thottam, "On the Job in China" and "The Growing Dangers of the China Trade," *Time* 170, no. 2 (2007): 27-31

**First Perspective: Urban Form**

An aerial view of Puxi reveals a series of high-rise commercial towers and highways that are superimposed on the old lilong fabric. This relation between low-rise lilong houses and corporate high-rises results from the unrestricted building regulations on zoning and heights introduced at the beginning of Deng's economic reform. The existence of the two extreme components of urban form – old low-rise fabric and the new high-rise buildings – generates a problematic dialogue between the old forms of inhabitation and the new corporate cultures. Whereas the gridiron structure and the fabric of low-rise houses could have been used by the contemporary developers as cultural elements to build onto, it was now regarded as an obsolete structure to be eradicated.

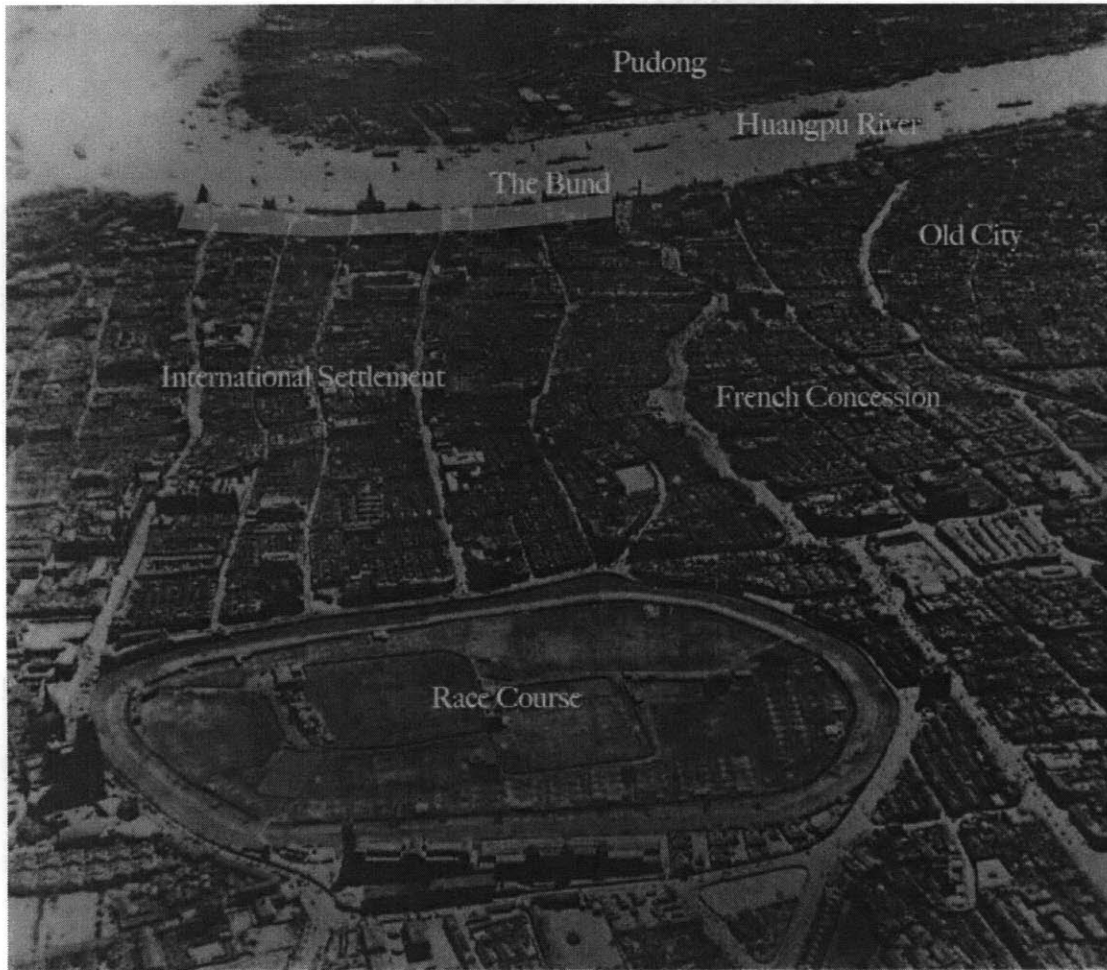


Figure 15: Bird's-eye view of Shanghai in 1937. Photograph: Visual Shanghai Project

What epitomizes this perspective is Charpentier's Century Avenue, Lujiazui's main spine. The false premise of the avenue begins with the determination of the width of the avenue to be exactly "one meter wider than the Champs Élysées" in order to denote the triumph of the making of the physical significant urban element. Its penetration through the diagonal super block of parallel housing in Pudong creates irregular shapes of land along the perimeter of the avenue. Since the program and anticipated use of the space in Pudong has never been made clear, the process of adding up the buildings to the side of the streets always emerges from the inconclusive additive process. Although the

Municipal Planning Bureau has developed comprehensive zoning and infrastructural plans, the District Authority Control's process of refining those plans with respect to the particular district's details, i.e. Floor Area Ratio and coverage, results in a changing of urban form. Moreover, when the plan comes down to the Controlled Detailed Planning Section, whose jobs are to execute decisions, grant permissions to buildings, and regulate the formal quality of each land plot, a series of performative rules and regulations re-define the final form of the physical design without any consideration of the original planning attempts. In other words, there is no central organization that gives a comprehensive overview of planning to the three planning units, working independently from the top.<sup>100</sup>

So, if we compare the proposed Avenue to its built reality, the continuous platform of buildings along the avenue is absent. Charpentier designed the Century Boulevard to be the primary component that gives an appropriate scale to the streets in order to facilitate interaction at the base of the buildings before getting into the super high-rise buildings. If the plan had been faithfully executed, it could have created reasonably strong urban characteristic. In Lujiazui, however, not only is the ground that mediates the perpendicular change fundamentally missing, but the arbitrariness in the

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<sup>100</sup> In Urban Planner Tingwei Zhang's research, he refers to these levels in the administrative structure of Shanghai as the municipal government (for the *Municipal Planning Bureau*), urban district (a district may have more than one million population; the largest district in Shanghai has 1.6 million population; for *District Authority Control*), and street offices (sub-district government, with a size approximately to a company in U.S. cities; for *Controlled Detailed Planning Section*). See Tingwei Zhang, "Urban Development and a Socialist Pro-Growth Coalition in Shanghai," *Urban Affairs Review* 37, no. 475 (2002): 485

execution of its open space is also disruptive to the sense of coherence, conjuring a monotonous experience in urban space.<sup>101</sup>



Figure 16: Century Avenue, as originally designed by Arte, Jean Marie Charpentier et Associés. Image: Shanghai Planning Museum

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<sup>101</sup> Dong Nan Nan and Stephanie Ruff, “Managing Urban Growth in Shanghai,” in *City Strategies*, 58 (2007): 32





Figure 17: Century Avenue in reality. Photographs: Peter G. Rowe

This monotony might have something to do with the attempt to make Lujiazui another Manhattan. Yet, while downtown Manhattan's dense skyscrapers are absorbed with the grid and lively street life steered by the hyper-dense environment of a financialscape, Pudong's skyscrapers stand out as scattered markers. The substantial

distances between building and building, building and open space, and building and sidewalk create a lifeless street scene, almost depriving the city of its exuberant life. While these actions have served to order amalgamating the city's urban form, in practice have overlooked a more important concern about the social stratification of a newly developed urban place – the issue of politics in the making of the civic reality.

### **Second Perspective: Buildings and Urban Imagery**

Confronted with the jungle of glittering high-rises reminiscent of a science-fiction movie, visitors to Shanghai might easily come to the conclusion that Shanghai is a very rich city. Yet these buildings are not even remotely fully occupied, and thus from this perspective, the tall buildings in Lujiazui become purely symbolic. The decision to position a handful of iconic skyscrapers side-by-side as a means of visual competition with other dense cities of the West is telling. The master plan proposes that the skyscrapers were to be grouped together in the heart of the CBD, and the other high-rise buildings were to be scattered randomly in both East and West sides of the Century Boulevard. Such a distribution would have accentuated the role of the towers as signifiers explicitly reinforcing the instant identity. These skyscrapers do for Shanghai what the “Eiffel Tower” does for Paris. As Roland Barthes puts it, not only does built form generate meanings that constitute the conception of the city, but also the impact of the materialization of ideas that prompts the creation of a new civic realm.<sup>102</sup> The idea of making a great cityscape consisting of high-rise buildings and monumental elements is

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<sup>102</sup> Roland Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower, and Other Mythologies*. Richard Howard. trans. (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1997). Also partially re-published in Leach, *Rethinking*, 172-80.

essential to the making of Lujiazui. Yet, tall buildings in Lujiazui were not built to satisfy the need for vertical expansion due to the lack of horizontal space, but for the purpose of generating monumental symbolic value.<sup>103</sup> The monumentality of urban elements are not subtle pieces of evidence of the action taken by the municipal government, and fulfilled by the developer and the designer, in the making of the particular “form” that recalls the patriotic past of China. Appearances mean everything to the Chinese. It is not surprising that their pragmatism would lead to the easiest way to establish a level economic playing field, if not a superior economic playing field, by building the highest skyscrapers: the players being Shanghai’s competitors seeking global city status.

This is evident from the attempt by Shanghai’s authority and its development partner to make Jin Mao Building and the World Financial Tower the tallest buildings in the world, and to be located in Lujiazui in the master plan. Both of them are the designs of eminent architectural firms from America, and are programmed to be mixed-use, consisting of office spaces, hotel rooms, conference halls, observation decks, and shopping complexes on the ground floors. For Jin Mao building, the upper part of its trunk is no more than a hyper-high atrium surrounded by corridors of hotel rooms, wrapped by the curtain wall skin. Elevation of the building to that extreme is an obvious manifestation of monumentality. Considering that labor in China is inexpensive, the construction of both

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<sup>103</sup> Ma Qingyun asserts “Pudong has certain *existing* dimensions of symbolic quality, to represent ambition and achievement in its new form of urbanization.” See Louisa Lim, *Shanghai Urban Development: The Future Is Now*, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6600367> (accessed July 8, 2007)

buildings does not require as much financial investment as if they were erected in America or Europe.<sup>104</sup>

The semiotic quality of both buildings is obviously intended yet in another manner: the local expressive references and the deliberate acquisition of visible symbols of progress.<sup>105</sup> It is as if their building is a boast that they can match Western architecture style in height and *grandeur*, but also put their indelible imprint on it. While the 88-story high Jin Mao Building was designed to resemble the shape of an ancient *Kaifang* pagoda, the legendary eleventh century Chinese brick pagoda in the northeast, reinforcing the sense of nationalism, the design of the World Financial Tower with the height of 460 meters has been the object of debate over the abstract connotations of the cylindrical void on the top of the building. This, by chance, hit on a sensitive issue between China and Japan. The New York Times journalist Howard French comments:

The representative of Mr. Minoru Mori [one of Japan's foremost real estate developers who funded the building of the World Financial Center] gamely protested that the circle with the sky ride was based on a traditional Chinese symbol – the moon gate – but in the end they quietly backed down, replacing the hole with a squarish slot.<sup>106</sup>

Also, even after the design had been finalized, some ten to twenty additional floors were added to the building. This is because the clients demanded that the building be not only

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<sup>104</sup> Read more about criticisms and comments on modern towers in China in Layla Dawson, "Towers to People," in *China's New Dawn: An Architectural Transformation* (New York: Prestel, 2005), 16-33

<sup>105</sup> Rowe, *East Asia*, 137

<sup>106</sup> Howard French, "SHANGHAI JOURNAL; In World Skyscraper Race, It Isn't Lonely at the Top," *The New York Times*, May 8, 2007. <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=FB0A15F83D550C7B8CDDAC0894DF404482> [retrieved 11 May 2007]

a World Financial Center, but also the World's tallest building.<sup>107</sup> The confidence of modern Chinese capitalism was confirmed in the making of “form” – the envelope that uses the marvel of engineering technology.<sup>108</sup>



Figure 18: *Left* Kaifang Pagoda, and *Right* Jin Mao Building. Photograph: Wang Xuyuan

<sup>107</sup> The core of the article reads: “while diplomatic, the explanation strains credibility, especially for anyone who knows the history. The Shanghai building was originally designed to have 94 floors, rising to roughly 1,509 feet, but has quietly grown since then, with more floors added, as well as more height to each floor, resulting in about 105 extra feet.” Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> See detail about the projects, renderings, and criticisms of both buildings in Xing Ruan, *New China Architecture* (Hong Kong: Periplus, 2006), 125-31, Dawson, *New Dawn*, 74-7, and Bernard Chan, *New Architecture in China* (New York; Merrell, 2005), 6-15



Figure 19: *Left* Model of the World Financial Center as original designed. *Right* A Rendering of the building after the circular opening on the top was replaced by the rectangle. Photographs: Kohn Pedersen Fox International

What this perspective evokes is not the uniqueness of urban semiotics in Shanghai, but the certain way in which high-rise buildings are pre-conceptualized with a simple inference of power manifestation at work.

### **Third Perspective: Streetscapes**

The skyline iconography makes one wonder how people on the street experience it. Leaving aside the issue of mimicking Manhattan, since we cannot assume if the planner of Lujiazui had in mind the necessity of socialization on the sidewalk level, one can conclude that streets in Lujiazui are not efficiently used given its excessive width. Century Boulevard has eight automobile lanes, one island, four bike lanes (two each way), and two sidewalks that are as wide as the automobile lanes, totaling more than 330 feet in its width. All streets that branch out of the Boulevard are half as wide. The district is not dense, and thus the public activity encouraged by urban theorists such as Jane Jacobs do not exist.<sup>109</sup> This problem has been observed by the Shanghai municipality, has since retrofitted the sidewalk by embedding it with a series of pocket landscape parks in order to humanize its size.

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<sup>109</sup> Jane Jacobs, "The Use of Sidewalks: Contacts," in *The Death and Life of the Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage, 1961), 55-73





Figure 20: Century Avenue and its oversized sidewalk. Seen from this photograph is a series of linear pocket parks retrofitted into the deserted sidewalk. Photograph: Shanghai Municipal Government



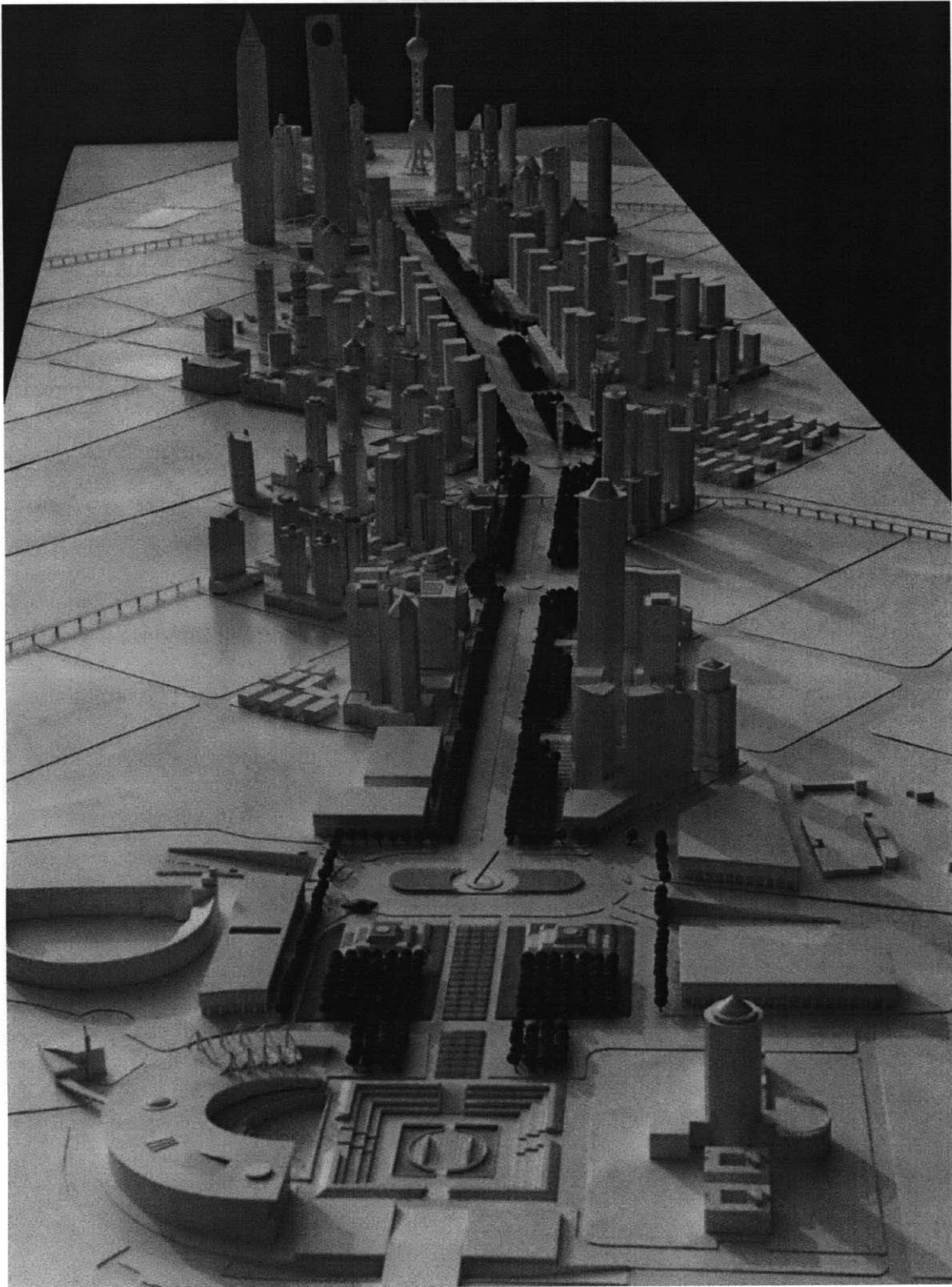


Figure 21: Model of the proposed Century Avenue by Charpentier, showing the relationship between the sidewalk to the high-rise buildings along the avenue, and from the buildings to the low-rise residential fabric as one moves further away from the avenue. Photograph: Shanghai Municipal Government

Despite the fact that Lujiazui was deserted at first glance, what might shed light on the situation is a comparison between the condition of streets in Lujiazui and “pre-Lujiazui” Shanghai. Street life is fostered by the human-scale elements (both planned and ad hoc) corresponding to the nature of the dwellers’ norms of inhabitation. This observation takes the methods by which the street was functionally and culturally conceived in pre-Lujiazui Shanghai as a point of reference. To understand the interaction between architecture and the urban form in terms of how its people perceive their city, it is essential also to look at how streets in Puxi have historically formed and performed overtime.

The key to comprehending what it was like to walk along the Bund is provided by the administrative functions of the nineteen foreign-owned buildings. The interactions between the buildings and the street were business transactions. Sidewalks served as the mediation. Beyond the mediating sidewalk, however, laboring activities and various modes of transportation were taking place. There were always Chinese laborers loading and unloading cargo from ships, pulling rickshaws and waiting for customers, walking on the street hoping to get itinerant employment. The Bund was usually crowded, but it was never over-crowded, since the major public and commercial spaces were located in inner parts of the city near the foreign settlements. One of the most fashionable vistas was from the top of a building on the West Bund, looking down to a street that curves to the East. Here, the Custom House and the Bank of China were the monumental landmarks.

On the street level, one rarely saw foreigners, as they stayed in their own special privileged enclaves. Apart from the Bund’s principal function as a reception point, it was

a natural choice for people to travel between the North and South sides of Shanghai: between the French Concession and the International Settlement.<sup>110</sup> The most significant architectural firm in Shanghai was the Hong Kong-based British firm Palmer and Turner, whose work includes the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, Cathay Hotel, and the Yokohama Specie Bank on the Bund. The model of architectural practice derived from Britain stylistically shaped the appearance of the city as a whole. The image of the International Concession echoed the image of London in the early 1900s.<sup>111</sup>

Five modes of transportation were used on the Bund, according to status of passengers: feet, bicycle, rickshaw, tram, and car. In contrast to the streets of the Bund, the streets of Lujiazui are confined to a single narrative. While the Bund embraced energetic street dynamism by its function as the reception point and travel corridor, Lujiazui streets are usually empty and deserted, illustrating of the complete failure of relating the scale of building to the scale of the sidewalk. The size of streets in Pudong is not defined by prevailing modes of transportation or commercial requirements; instead, it

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<sup>110</sup> Images depicting the construction of the Cathay Hotel (also called the Sassoon House) during 1927-29 and the Custom House (1925-1927) demonstrate the later influence of Western steel construction technique in Shanghai, despite the conventional Chinese wall-bearing construction. Both buildings were steel-framed using modern post-and-beam skeleton. In addition, followed the prevailing “neo-eclectic” trend, both buildings were fabricated with the colonial façade to resemble the appearance of the Western architecture from which its construction techniques were derived. The neo-classical appearance of the “The most Modern Hotel in the Far East” was a mere skin of a steel frame skeleton enhanced by the methods of Chinese construction.

<sup>111</sup> Founded in 1868 and worked extensively in East Asia. Today, the firm is still actively engaged in the building of corporate architecture in major Asian cities. In 1982, The Palmer and Turner partnership changed to a corporate structure, the P&T Group.

is demarcated by the political agenda: to convey monumentality that helps to reinforce the sense of nationalism.<sup>112</sup>

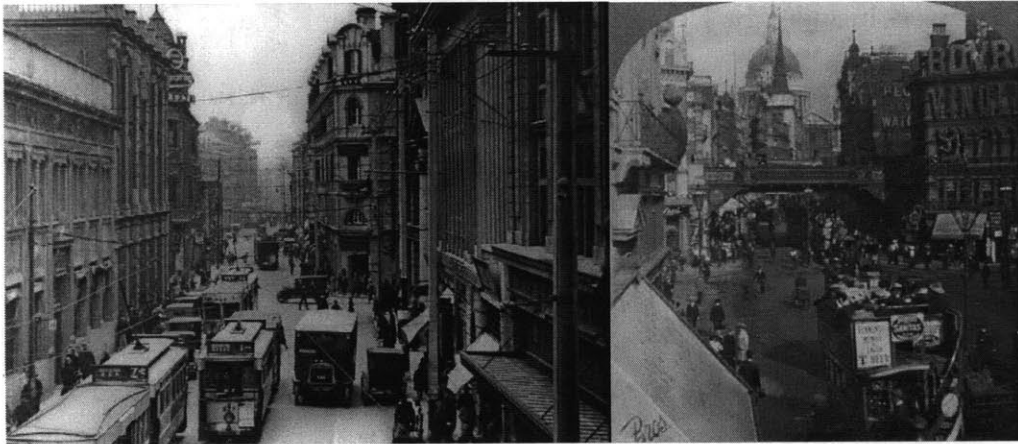


Figure 22: *Left* International Settlement in the 1920s , and *Right* St. Pauls and Ludgate Hill from Fleet Street, London, in 1906. Photographs: Virtual Shanghai Project

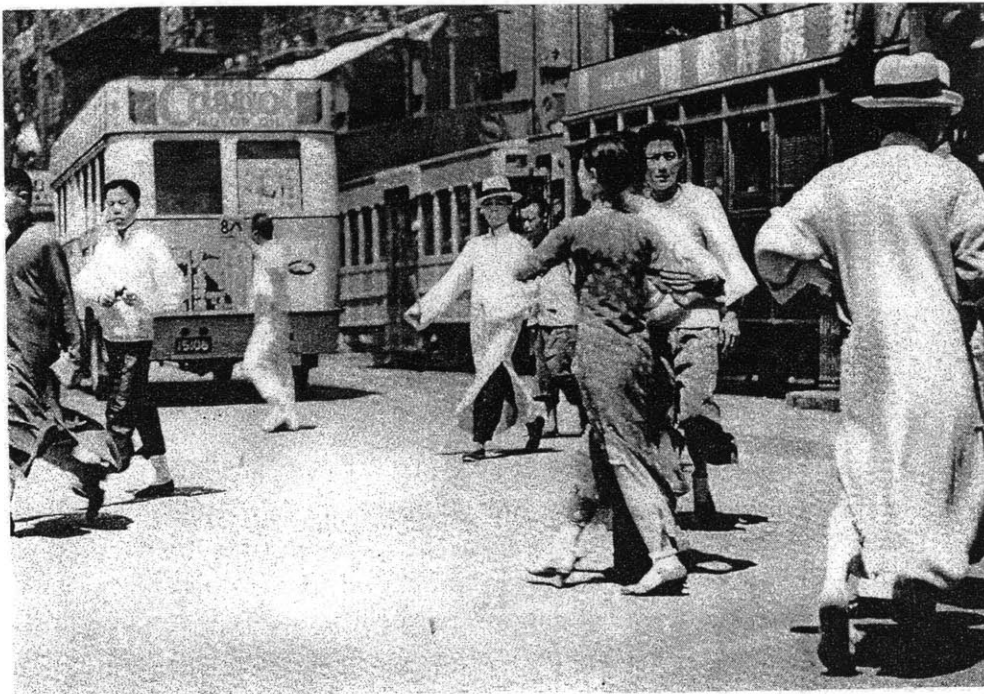


Figure 23: Street scene in Shanghai in 1900s. Photograph: Virtual Shanghai Project

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<sup>112</sup> Rowe, *East Asia*, 134-7



Figure 24: Empty sidewalk of Century Avenue during rush hours.  
Photograph: Non Arkaraprasertkul

#### **Fourth Perspective: Visualization of the Skylines**

Both the Bund and Pudong are important icons of this treaty port city. The similarity between the two is that the images of both are meant to display the expectant future of this urban place. For the Bund, it was the commercial value of individual business on the Treaty Port's shore, which the appearance of a Western environment could reinforce. The making of the Bund skyline comes from the internal need: the need for visual representation using built forms was necessitated by the establishment of the various external cultures that existed in Shanghai from the opening of the treaty port. In contrast, the visual representation of Pudong is a result of an external push. As the Bund is a linear corridor, the appearance of the building is vivid experienced as a panorama –

the height of buildings is not as important as the degree to which it can be seen from afar; a building can be clearly perceived no matter where the viewers are. But for Pudong, with a setting that spans the large urban space, the height and size of buildings are essential, which is why the planning of Pudong favors many high-rise buildings. Though specifically designed for effect, their effect is weaker than the ad hoc Bund.

In Kevin Lynch's terms, this understanding resonates with the "pre-conceived imagery – something to which the observer can relate by virtue of its spatial relations to the observer."<sup>113</sup> The Bund is a skyline that allows both visual and physical interactions between the city and its people, for the image one sees and the physical interactions with the buildings are firmly reinforced by its inhabitable quality. Pudong's skyline, however, is relatively abstract. Not only is the composition of Pudong skyline too complex to be perceived comprehensively (only outlines and gestures are expressed through visuals), but also the human scale is lost in the overwhelmingly vast and pedestrian unfriendly planning of its public space. For instance, Century Avenue is too wide given the height of the surrounding buildings, and the lack of public functions. Considering the vastness of space unrelated to every man's sense of scale, it is difficult to imagine how a person would be able to coherently conceive and remember the physical space by its urban characteristics. Yet, Pudong is not without living beings. Coming up from a subway station, visitors encounter the lack of directional indicators; they might not have any clue they have arrived in Pudong. Despite the clarity of Pudong's high-rise buildings when viewed from the Puxi shore, they do not help to orient people because they are placed arbitrarily in the vast concrete landscape of Lujiazui, which does not enable visitors to

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<sup>113</sup> Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge; MA: MIT Press, 1960): 8

relate themselves to anything familiar. Then, as they start to walk from the Oriental Pearl at the tip of the Avenue on the West to the Central Park, it takes fifteen minutes, the distance between these vertical and horizontal icons of the city is more than enough for the impression of the monumentality of the vertical to disappear and naturally to be replaced by the flatness of the horizon without a remnant of the mental image of the city. The size of the avenue and location of the buildings do fulfill the intended political posturing, but the overwhelming scale fragments any visual effect.



Figure 25: Lujiazui's Central Park, located in the center of the CBD surrounded by rows of high-rises and scattered buildings with no supporting density. Photograph: Peter G. Rowe





Figure 26: The famous postcard scenery of Pudong's skyline. Photograph: Shanghai Municipal Government

The much-celebrated image of Pudong is apparent only when viewed from a distance. Regarding its principal connotation of progress by means of built form, Pudong needs the entire environment. While the Bund does not need a major iconic building to define its symbolic significance, the image of Pudong is dominated by the unorthodox appearance of the “Pearl,” the pagoda-shaped skyscraper, and the series of modern reflective skin buildings. The inevitable emergence of modern and contemporary building typologies disturbs the cultural identity and the way people conceive their meanings. Both the Bund and Pudong are case studies of how complicated uses of architecture as visuals in a city construct meaning *vis-à-vis* global narrative. Notwithstanding the tradition of mimicking skylines, which may be in a naïve sense such as “Manhattan has many skyscrapers,” the fact that they are really “assembling” it without thorough understanding



of their own need is critical. This causes new cities to look alike. Re-asserted by *The Economist*: “No wonder that swathes of Seoul look like swathes of Shanghai. Even the most ambitious buildings, many designed by trophy architects who flit from one country to the next, often seem alien to their *environs*.”<sup>114</sup>

Whether they fail or not, it is certain that they are trying to convey to the world their own messages of monumentality in service to a larger agenda of identities of power. Observed by Jennie Chen: “It [Shanghai] has been torn asunder by colonialism, war, political exhaustion, economic ebbs and flows, and social implosions. Yet look at it now; it is spectacular by all visual standards.”<sup>115</sup>

### **Summary: Means of Understanding**

The selling point of Shanghai’s tourism in the early twentieth century was the elegant image that replicated Western neo-classical styles. The insistent focus on the monumental, iconic representation of Shanghai consistently obscured its human scale, especially the sense of inhabitation of the city. Historically, the Bund was on the tourist map because of its iconographic nature. Its accommodation of many intruding cultures did not succeed in mediating between tradition and modernity, but rather inclined toward abrupt representations of external cultural norms. Also apparent in a microcosmic perspective, the inherent contradiction between local and foreign notions of open space –

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<sup>114</sup> “In Place of God: Culture Replaces Religion,” *The Economist* No. 383 (8527, 5-11 May 2007): 14

<sup>115</sup> Jennie Chen, “Urban Architectures: A Search for an Authentic Shanghai” (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 2003), 59

observed from the street scenes – represented the other notion of a modern Chinese city, particularized by the tension between the leap towards Western modernity and finding a new Chinese identity through the mixture of diversified cultures.

What these observations in this chapter seem to suggest is a fourfold conclusion. The first is that there was a lack of coordination in the planning process, which results in the fragmented urban fabric. Second, the overwhelming reliance on monumentality of urban elements such as high-rise buildings, without any concern in their utilitarian role in the city, is not conducive to a felicitous distribution of density in Shanghai's current urbanism. Third, there is an absence of human scale in the streetscape that diminishes contact, the sense of security, and the pedestrian energy level of the city. And fourth: the production of the city as an image creates, as suggested by the first conclusion, a fragmented urban form and urban spatial organization. This is the reality of Lujiazui.



Figure 27: *Above* Hyper dense high-risescape of Puxi – the Old Shanghai, and *Below* Sparse cityscape of Lujiazui. Photographs: Peter Morgan

Whether or not the pedestrians saw the monumental buildings along the Bund as urban icons of which they should be proud, or as mimicry of the Western metropolis that eroded their Chinese identity is important to the holistic understanding of Shanghai, which has to be contextualized and understood from every possible angle. Knowing how and from where we view the history of Shanghai enables us to see beyond the veneer of the magnificent scenery of the Bund and approach the fuller “reality” of Shanghai.

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## **Chapter Three**

### ***The Politics of Built Form***

Eventually, our time traveler's reactions went from surprise to fascination. He then took a walk from the Bund toward the West side on Nanjing Road, expecting to find the Racecourse; he instead found the People's Square. After wrestling with the automatic ticketing machine, which he surprisingly liked, he took Shanghai Subway line three – which was now comfortable for him – to Lujiazui. Coming out at the new landscape of Century Avenue, he was totally disoriented and lost. The scale of the road was too big. The imaginary landscape of coherent built forms, which had excited him when viewing it from the other side of the river, decomposed into the vast and gigantic fragments upon arriving in Lujiazui's district.

Not wanting to be influenced by nostalgia nor be branded as a conservative “old Shanghainese,” he asked the question: “how can I understand this place by means of its contemporary value?”

Fundamental to the argument of this thesis is the undeniable presence of the “New Shanghai” – the term that evokes an image of a city enmeshed in capitalism, high-tech infrastructure, and contemporary architecture. It is the fabrication of a so-called “instant urbanity”<sup>116</sup> that responds to the culture of a capitalist-oriented market economy. The ascendancy of the new skyline of Lujiazui is the outcome of the move toward “Open Door” modernization (as opposed to the earlier modernization during the treaty port era). The Open Door policy in the late 1980s made the building of Lujiazui unprecedented in speed of construction, approach to marketability, and urban form. The new spatial organization is viewed from a different angle as a result of the shift in market strategy. Fulong Wu describes:

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<sup>116</sup> Marshall, *Focal Point*, 105

“..[U]rban growth...[in Shanghai]...is a result of a profound shift from ‘developmental’ state to the ‘entrepreneurial’ city, which takes its place [in this case, Lujiazui] as a spatial commodity.”<sup>117</sup>

Thus, we should understand Shanghai not only as a city of physical expression, but also as a breeding ground of cultural modernizations compelled by the onslaught of commercialization from the 1840s onward. For instance, the Treaty Port, the regional center for commerce and industry, and the focal point of China’s economy can only be operate where the arbitrariness of cultural resistance persists through an ethnically diversified environment. The urgent needs of the new urban identity pushed incrementally by the so-called “socialist market economy” resulted in obviously exorbitant urban experimentation. Shanghai is always a natural choice for the experiment because, as commented by Zheng Shiling, throughout the history, “Shanghai has *always* been an open city.”<sup>118</sup>

### **Shanghai Cosmopolitanism: The Cultural Infrastructure**

The making of Shanghai can be accounted for largely by considering the *political-economic* force operating within the city. As the growth of the city has been predominantly the result of its advantageous position as a port, Shanghai’s economy has always been

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<sup>117</sup> This raises both *meta* and implicative questions in many issues, e.g. relationships between capital and labor, environment, massive consumer market, and so on. For details, see Fulong Wu, *Urban Development in Post-Reform China: State, Market, and Space* (London: Routledge, 2007)

<sup>118</sup> Zheng adds: “[t]he competitive tradition underlies its dynamic and progressive nature, an entrepreneurial spirit that sets it apart from other Chinese cities. But, as with any city that occupies a strategic global position, its future lies not only in the hands of its architects and policymakers, but in the national policy for growth and development. See Zheng Shiling, “Shanghai: The Fastest City?” *Urban Age: A Worldwide Investigation into the Future of Cities*, [http://www.urban-age.net/03\\_conferences/conf\\_shanghai.html](http://www.urban-age.net/03_conferences/conf_shanghai.html) [retrieved 15 May 2007]

prosperous, over which internal politics have been subject to control.<sup>119</sup> From the beginning of the colonial period, through the age of “Oriental Paris (and Manhattan),” to the present, a series of political interventions has forcefully changed the city’s built environment. The underlying factor that makes the intensity and the level of physical transformation of Shanghai different from other cities in China is its cosmopolitan society, and its short urban history. The cultural infrastructure of the city has been gradually softened by the intrusion of foreign values, represented through all possible forms of environment. Because there has never been a significant resistance from the Shangahinese themselves, the perception of the city has consistently been dominated by the “Shanghaiers,” especially during the Golden Age.

Heterogeneity, as brought about by hybridization became the internal culture of Shanghai. So, as many scholars point out, Shanghai’s urban culture has been created, manipulated, and contextualized by the foreign models. The deeply rooted amalgamation of external cultures made Shanghai in the 1930’s “the Other China,” to use Marie-Claire Bergère’s term.<sup>120</sup> Prior to the present, Shanghai had never been considered a focal point of cultural development, but rather a melting pot of everything that was possible to encourage the growth of the city as China’s economic engine. Shanghai was “the Emperor’s ugly daughter”: she may be ugly, but she wields the power. This power

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<sup>119</sup> Yan Zhongmin, “Shanghai: The Growth and Shifting Emphasis of China’s Largest City,” in *Chinese Cities: The Growth of the Metropolis Since 1949*. ed. Victor F.S. Sit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985): 94-125

<sup>120</sup> Considering that the term “Chinese cities,” according to a contemporary narrative and research account of Lawrence J. Ma, implies “the sharing of certain common characteristics or the constitution of a single cohesive socio-economic, spatial, or political entity,” Shanghai differs from the rest of China by all means. See Lawrence J. Ma, “The State of the Field of Urban China: A Critical Multidisciplinary Overview of the Literature,” *China Information*, No. 20(2006): 377

enabled the process of urban changes in Shanghai to freely ignore or embrace all precedents in order to produce the city's attractive image, in accordance with the aims of whoever was in authority at the time. The common perception is that Shanghai was, has been, and will continue to be a "goose" that lays golden eggs for China's leap towards economic modernization. Serving the city's economic role, hybrid culture is fundamental to Open Door capitalism. Not only does it welcome foreign flow of cash for circulation in China, but it also fosters business transactions from every possible channel, themselves loosened by the pre-conceived "Shanghai as a goose" mentality. So, by nature, the culture of Shanghai is the culture of *hybridity*. Moreover, the idea of expanding the city across the river to Pudong is by no means new – the Japanese vision of Pudong in the 1940s is closest to what we see today. Ma Quinyun comments:

[The hybridity] is indeed the true [Shanghai's] Chineseness. Everything is in constant mutation; nothing is set as fixity. We [the Shanghainese] don't follow any spatial models. We don't care about the look of the building, so much so everybody still lives in Shanghai in ugly buildings. We care about how convenient life is.<sup>121</sup>

The existence of Lujiazui, however, was not solely economic, but the inevitable result of several factors. It was *initiated* by spatial necessity as Shanghai required physical expansion in order to accommodate its floating population. It was *driven* by the Open Door modernization concept, and *pushed* by the progressive politics of Shanghai's government. It was also *enabled* by Chinese pragmatism. Yet, Lujiazui ultimately owes its existence to the soft cultural infrastructure of Shanghai cosmopolitanism and its facilitation of the city's heterogeneous nature.

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<sup>121</sup> Louisa Lim, *Shanghai Urban*



## The Politics of Built Forms

By constructing new but false images of Shanghai that does not exist, planners and architects are “manipulating history” by manipulating geography, resting the city’s future on an edge between the pain of historical reality and the futile hopes of a city that yearns for the reshaping of history.

-- Jennie Chen<sup>122</sup>

The issue of politics is essential to the understanding of Shanghai not as a Chinese city, but a city that China desires to exploit. I have been building my argument on Rhoads Murphey’s and Jeffrey Wasserstrom’s analytical notions of “Shanghai *exceptionalism*.”<sup>123</sup> Politics in this sense is confined to the understanding of “individual or collective choices” driven by aspirations to greater status and power that inform the design of this particular built form and environment. The establishment of a “Shanghai special economic” zone in 1984 is one such choice yielding both a political statement and a physical form, demonstrating the aim to make Shanghai an economic powerhouse of international trade. Again, as implied in Bergère’s accounts on the breakneck pace of Shanghai’s urban development, Shanghai was a southeastern city along with other cities in the Pearl River Delta that were chosen in the 1990s to operate as the “head of the dragon.”<sup>124</sup> This imagery was deployed by Deng in the confrontation with the so-called “conservative bureaucracy in Beijing”<sup>125</sup> in the Post-Mao era. In keeping with William Skinner’s 1964 model of China’s political cognitive geography, the Beijing-centric view of

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<sup>122</sup> Chen, *Urban Architectures*, 76

<sup>123</sup> Rhoads Murphey, “The Treaty Ports and China’s Modernization” in *The Chinese City Between Two Worlds*, Mark Elvin and G. William Skinner, eds. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974): 17-71, Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, “Locating Shanghai: Having Fits about Where it Fits” in *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900-1950*, Joseph W. Esherrick, ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000): 192-201

<sup>124</sup> Marie-Claire Bergère, *Histoire de Shanghai* (Paris: Fayard, 2002)

<sup>125</sup> Marcia Reynders Ristaino, “Histoire de Shanghai by Marie-Claire Bergère,” *Book Review*. Project Muse. <http://muse.jhu.edu> [retrieved 16 April 2007]

the regime's power in the 1980s would have require keeping the capital city a mere symbolic city, adverse to any intervention which might disturb alignments of Chinese cosmology and power recognized by the Chinese from the ancient time.<sup>126</sup> In other words, Deng realized that Beijing had to remain conservative, and unproductive economically, but he knew he could do whatever he wanted with Shanghai. In order to enlarge the available space to support massive expansions of the Open Door's economy, the idea of moving across the river to Pudong was introduced. This time around the promise of gains in national prestige and power on the global stage finally justified the overwhelming expense of required infrastructure investments.

Although there was no official study on the development plan, the approximate cost of expansion across the north-south axis of Puxi, which were mostly farmlands, could also be as considerable as building up a new business town in Pudong. The uneconomical investment in infrastructure, which had prevailed over the similar attempts in the city's short urban history, became less unimportant compared to the far more critical resurrection of the entire country's economic engine.

By moving away from the pre-conceived image of Shanghai and other Chinese cities, the Shanghai government and the central power as a whole are strongly convinced that they can manifest the liberality of economic progress by direct confrontation and competition. Lujiazui's skyline is not meant to replicate the skyline of Manhattan, but to *succeed* and *replace* it – beating Manhattan in its own game – ambitiously proclaiming a

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<sup>126</sup> William G. Skinner, "Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 24, no. 1 (1964): 3-43

new era of world economic power and the shifting of the global financial center from the West to the East. The result is an absolute control in the making of urban elements, putting democracy – the making of urban form in a sociological aspect – in the secondary position. The idea in itself might sound unreasonably bold, but the fact that the way in which the Chinese central authority conceptualizes progress should not be underestimated.

The Bund might have suffered a great deal from the Communist take-over, but the reason that it could not be used for the ambitious program of the “New Shanghai” was that the space requirements for the new city were beyond its capacity. This was the reason for the re-assessment of Pudong as the new development entity. The first job of the new business center was to reinforce the new urban identity to project the manifestation of global economy. The emphasis on the proposals of the international competition of Lujiazui was not accepted on innovation, creativity, or sustainability, but rather on the feasibility, the ease of implementation, and the particular image of the city. This resulted in a series of incomprehensible urban elements, including the arbitrarily distributed urban plan that accommodates an over-sized boulevard, deserted central park, gargantuan high-rises, and neglected waterfront. What is seen as an urbanist strategy to design a better city out of the *tabula rasa* of Pudong was not taken seriously by the authorities who were fixated on replicating the image of constructing simulacra of a Western metropolis built elsewhere collectively over the course of the previous two centuries.

While international architects espoused a model for a new urban place drawn from the lessons of failed modern cities, the interplay of politics had already dictated a

particular form. The existence of tall skyscrapers in a place that is a vast landscape is an anti-thesis to the “form follows finance” theory of the skyscraper.<sup>127</sup> Michael Masterson writes: “Shanghai itself is so over the top... [y]ou wander about slack-jawed and dumbfounded, staring up at the gargantuan buildings and wondering who *built* them, who *occupies* them, and who *pays* the rent? (Four hundred skyscrapers at, say, two hundred million dollars apiece - what does that come to and how can it be justified?)”<sup>128</sup> The final plan of Lujiazui reflects the politics of built form through the “international presence in response to a new globalized environment,” which, according to Zhang Xudong – or even Fredric Jameson – is *postmodern* to the core.<sup>129</sup> Peter Rowe reflects on this as a “missing of the middle ground.”<sup>130</sup>

Taking away the political interventions and mobilizations that have created it, Shanghai would either decline, as many scholars have hypothesized, due to its moral decay (the support from working class, and intellectuals would no longer be there to sustain the presence of liberality) or, at the other extreme, it would “organically grow”

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<sup>127</sup> Carol Willis, *Form follows Finance: Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995.), Paul Goldberger, *The Skyscraper* (New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1981)

<sup>128</sup> Michael Masterson, “How to Grow Your Business Like China: A 3-Part Confucian Strategy, Part 1: What a Difference 20 Years Can Make” *Early to Rise*, <http://www.earlytorise.com/archive/html/062706-2.html> [retrieved 22 April 2007]

<sup>129</sup> Jameson criticizes and questions the images of contemporary urbanism, lacing social and economic issues into the propaganda of progressivism of the developing regions. See Fredric Jameson, “Future City,” *NLR*, No. 21 (May/June, 2003): 65-79. And Fredric Jameson, “The Politics of Utopia,” *NLR*, No. 25 (Jan/Feb, 2004): 35-54. My main argument significantly emerged from a fruitful seminal discussion I had with my colleague at Harvard University’s East Asia Studies Program, Har Ye Kan, whose principal reflections on the politics of built form is: “Governance, and discipline and knowledge of the population, thus firmly rests upon the layout and built forms of the city, to control and configure the spaces in which people flow, so as to regulate them with this information of flows.” Har Ye Kan, email to author, March 23, 2007

<sup>130</sup> Rowe, *East Asia*, 153-7

and, at the same time, heal itself from the mortal wounds to become a Western metropolis like Manhattan or Chicago. Lujiazui would still be built, but in a less aggressive way since there would be no need to oppose the established skyline. Its job would be to support the demand for the reallocation of the financial sector, providing an opportunity for the rationalized economy of scale, rather than the steroidal “economy of speed.”

### **Perceptions of Shanghai**

So, how should we *perceive* Shanghai, considering its condition of hybridity and the abrupt leap from rural to urban and from urban to “hyper-urban” as a result of the city’s instant image making? The answers are twofold. The first comes from a historical angle. The development of Pudong as a whole is an “inflation” of Shanghai’s urban development. Despite the great difference in scale, the gradual building of the Bund was no less provocative than the instant “making” of the Pudong New Financial District today. In fact, in a socio-economic perspective, the Bund waterfront created a larger impact on the urban realm, considering the “bleakness” and the lack of urban experience of the city at the turn of the nineteenth century. The building of the Bund was a cultural explosion since it was built on top of rural-ness. In addition, taking into account the proximity of the building to the waterfront, the monumentality of the Bund was unparalleled even by Western standards. The prime location of the waterfront of the new financial city became its identity as a point of reception for global trading. It indeed put Shanghai on the map of global finance during the period of “Rising Shanghai.” If we take the building of the Bund as a precedent for the subsequent urban development, the

making of Lujiazui is *nothing new*. Ackbar Abbas comments: “Shanghai today is... also something more subtle and historically allusive: the city as a remake...”<sup>131</sup> The purpose of Lujiazui is to create an impact similar to the one made by the Bund in the 1930s. The detachment of the superficial planning process from corresponding functions of townscape fails to grasp the sophistication of the image of the Bund. A city of a vast non-programmed landscape, unpedestrianized environment, and high-rise jungles, although successful in attracting lucrative investments, falls short in attracting people. I am talking about a population representative of Shanghai.

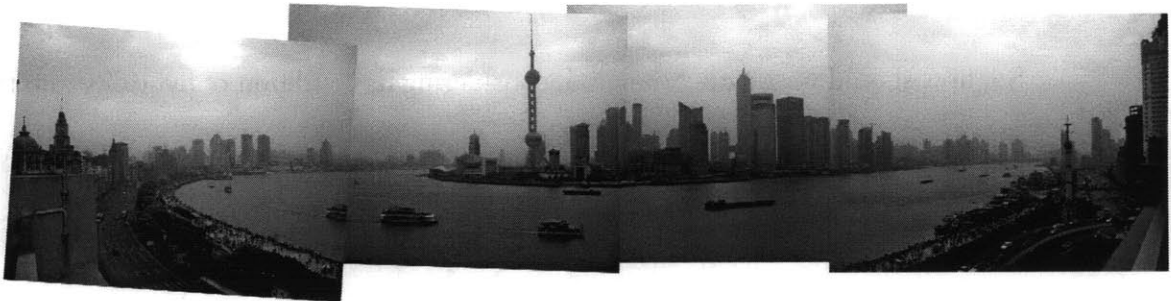


Figure 28: Panorama of Shanghai’s skyline showing the juxtaposition of two skylines: the Old colonial and the new modern skyscrapers. Photograph: Ashia Sun Penghui

Lujiazui will continually attract foreign flows of capital and provide massive job opportunities for the citizens of Shanghai – but in what sense? Shanghai in the 1930s consisted of foreigners and immigrants; the city’s culture was a responsive mechanism to the influx of the “otherness,” creating a so-called “Shanghai culture.” Built form and environment were not pre-designed to cope with the change, but were continually added in order to accommodate the exciting commercial initiatives and the need for the image.

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<sup>131</sup> Gandelonas, *Shanghai Reflections*, 37. I owe this quote to my colleague Har Ye Kan at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University. Her master’s thesis “Nationalism: Architecture and Urbanism of Shanghai” resonates with my own thesis though from a different angle.

The opposite is true of Pudong where everything the particular future anticipated was chosen for maximum impact. In a similar vein, if Lujiazui is not to follow the same footsteps but to move beyond what Puxi achieved in both qualitative and quantitative senses – money and identity – it will have to deal with the “contemporariness” of Shanghai in the same way Puxi did in the 1930s. Lujiazui may or may not have to deal with the same factors. These include foreign investors and foreigners seeking their fortunes in a vibrant and dynamic business atmosphere.

The second answer comes from an architectural-urban point of view. Our perception of Shanghai to some extent hinges on our understanding of *hybrid urbanism*. It is useful to return to our earlier question: Is the urbanism of Shanghai hybrid? Has the urbanism of Shanghai *ever* been hybrid? The answer is neither fixated to just yes or no; but on second thought, this perception should be secondary to the understanding of the city as a physical expression of the collective visions of its planners insofar as the condition of hybrid urbanism in itself does not alter justifications of the different faces of the city. Instead of trying to search for the identity of Chinese urban culture, it may be just that hybridity is indeed the intrinsic characteristic of Shanghai urbanism. The abrupt leap from rural to urban after the Treaty of Nanjing in the shadow of the Opium War represents the domination of foreign planning and the recession of domestic culture. As Shanghai had never been an urban place prior to the opening of the Treaty port, external forces brought about the urbanism of Shanghai from the start. Puxi developed as a western city in form positioned in China – a condition that was inherently hybrid.

In this sense, if we use the meaning of hybridity as a “mixing of two cultural confluences,” the emergence of the modern Treaty port and the city of Shanghai was solely an outcome of one political ideology, which then influenced the making of the city. There is no “native Shanghainese.” Either the original inhabitants moved out of the city during the settlement period or were dominated by the foreign culture to become “colonial Shanghai” urbanites, the presence of the native has never been sufficiently strong to persist under the intrusion of foreign dominance, which would allow the city to be re-composed by divergent cultural forces.

From the city scale, Shanghai enjoyed the coexistence and incorporation of different planning elements, including the super block, central public recreational space, commercial boulevards, and the lilong. Thanks to the massive immigration of the foreigners who had made the city a cosmopolitan urban place, the unprecedented Westernized plans of the city were accepted by the citizenry who did not feel attached to the old Shanghai. Lujiazui’s existence does not hybridize Shanghai. As a financial center “out there” to serve a particular purpose of the government, this “Chinese City for the Twenty-First Century” is autonomous by nature. Apart from the fact that it was built out of a field of swamps across the river from the Bund where there was no cultural significance, its programs and functions were solidly defined by the planning bureau to be separated from those of Puxi. Its unique infrastructure was ambitiously put forth toward becoming the “Other Shanghai.” Its purpose was to hook into global flows of capital by



means of the financial service sector.<sup>132</sup> The city image of Lujiazui is expected in the same way to displace the image of the existing Shanghai, the Bund.<sup>133</sup>

To pursue this argument further, Shanghai has always been *the* economic engine of China; therefore the fabrication and construction of the new global economic culture are logically rationalized by the way in which the city extends this perception. If there was *genius loci* at any given time of urbanized Shanghai, it would be the being “Non-Chinese China,” or the hybrid culture of cosmopolitan Shanghai.

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<sup>132</sup> Olds, *Globalization*, 182

<sup>133</sup> Richard Marshall grounds the complicated notions of urban space and its definition in the momentum of China’s market economy. See Richard Marshall, *Focal Point*, 85-105

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## ***Conclusion***

The making of both The Bund and Lujiazui can be conceived as a *production of image*, supported by the demand for economic amelioration. The purposes of the making of both skylines are confined to a single keyword, “foreigners.” But in a different way: foreigners built the Bund for themselves, while Lujiazui was created by the Chinese to attract foreign flows of capital. Setting aside an issue of urban heritage versus the new high-tech urban elements across the river, it is obvious that the planning of Lujiazui is less concerned with the tastes of the public.

Although the making of the Bund skyline during the early twentieth century was superficial to the extent that the chosen forms of the “design templates” were derived from the Western precedents to replicate particular images, the abstract quality of urban space imbedded in the spatial organization of the Bund waterfront facilitated its acceptance by the society as discussed earlier in this thesis. This mediated the differences internal social factor in social structure between the foreigners and the Chinese who lived in Shanghai. This is not the case for Lujiazui. Notwithstanding the fact that a particular “form” was pre-determined by the authority, several famous architects were invited to submit their design proposals in order to provide some fresh ideas, which were to be judged for their “formal” quality rather than the quality of the plan conceived in the manner of urban design of our time.

The politics behind the rejection of the favored plan by Richard Rogers reinforces the argument that the idea of the building of the “new image” was already pre-conceived. There is no attempt to implement any urbanistic elements proposed by Rogers. Reading through the physical urban form of Lujiazui, it is difficult to find the relationship between forms of buildings and the urban structure as far as their integrity of urban expression. The abrupt changes in the scale of the building to the streets disturb the urban morphology. The lofty political ideals opted for the “tallest skyscrapers,” the “longest bridge,” the “largest boulevard.”

In this thesis, I have sought to understand the nature of the driving global forces that are propelling the production of Shanghai’s Lujiazui today in relationship to its semi-colonial past represented by the Bund in the 1930s, and to call attention to the emergence of Shanghai in the world through its intrinsic potential, setting aside the issue of its vanishing “historical authenticity.” By tracing the history and politics of Shanghai, this thesis shows the set of conditions that have forged Shanghai. “The man who lived seventy years ago,” provides a one-sided reflection on the radical change of urbanism essential to the examination of the history of this city of rebirth. While our man would not be expected to explore areas outside the cityscape, his standing in front of the Oriental Pearl TV Tower enables him to gain a pedestrian’s perception of the holistic function of built form and environment. The situation and social context of the time he came from is different from today. The difficulty of doing justice to the architecture and urbanism of Shanghai lies in the historical context of both The Bund and Lujiazui, for which the time traveler story provides a framework.

Shanghai will not be able to escape its nature of being a hyper-competitive athlete in the track of global economy – truly, it has always been.

Nevertheless, although the opportunities are seized, the *cons* of the rivalry shall also be seriously taken into consideration. The national goal to put Shanghai on the map of global finance and the rights of local citizens to comprehend and cherish their urban realms are equally important. Attention must be paid to the process of “urban retrofitting” to fulfill the needs of the city. That is, the market economy, which has been responsible for putting a market town on an international standing with other great metropolises of commerce, must to continue operating on the premise of making Shanghai a city of cultural diversity. It took Puxi more than a century to be loved and cherished by its dwellers by virtue of the gradual construction of its own urban culture – the culture of cosmopolitanism – eventually overcoming the fact that the city was no more than a cash cow for the foreigners.

In thinking of Shanghai, one has to understand how to balance the two urban orders: *human interventions*, as the mechanisms of physical manipulation and construction, and *internal social transformations*, as the cultural value “from within” that are subject to the way the city works beyond the gaze of the artificiality of the built environment. This thesis suggests no balance exists between these two orders due to the impossibility of judgment on this qualitative – conceptual – consideration, but rather outlines the sets of social and cultural conditions into which the city has been transformed throughout its short but complicated history dominated by its politics while represented by its urban form.

Our time traveler never liked the “Ugly Pearl” – neither did I – but he could not avoid seeing it. Its overwhelming scale and the notorious form distinguished it from the rest of Shanghai’s cityscape. It was everywhere, in the postcards, magazine, advertisements, and billboards. He started to realize that this was propaganda using the entire environment to promote a particular point of view!

The hyper-modern environment can be captured and remembered not only by the lens of the camera, but also by the lenses of every visitor’s eyes. Before he realized it, he started to embrace its impressive silhouette, as it gradually replaced his initial perception of Shanghai. It was a *déjà vu* – the Bund was not likable when it was first built but later became the symbol of the Old Shanghai. After looking beyond the ostentatious appearance of the New Shanghai, by virtue of its politicized history, the Pearl stands as a true symbol of its “own task,” making sense of the city’s new identity as Shanghai Contemporary.

That is to say, he began to like Contemporary Shanghai – *so do I*.

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