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Culture and tourism-led peri-urban transformation in China – The case of Shanghai

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ABSTRACT

Culture and tourism occupy an important position in urban development strategy in both Global North and South. While most studies on culture-led development in China focus on inner city regeneration, little research has been conducted on peri-urban transformations under culture- and tourism-led approach. With two case studies in peri-urban Shanghai, this research critically examines in detail why and how culture-led development planned and implemented under the specific local context and critically reflects the implications on peri-urban transformation. Engaged with the literature on cultural instrumentisation and urban thematisation in an entrepreneurial city, this paper argues that culture-led peri-urban development in Shanghai were initiated by the local state, to serve multiple purposes of boosting land price, building a prestigious image attracting investors and tourists, and fostering cultural and creative industries. However, more often than not, culture was only harnessed as a 'buzz word' that provides a justification for large-scale land development, and planned cultural creative industries zones were often reduced to places for leisure and tourism based consumption.

1. Introduction

There has been increasing focus on culture as an urban development strategy both in the Global North and Global South. "[t]he idea that culture can be employed as a driver for urban economic growth has become part of the new orthodoxy by which cities seek to enhance their competitive position."(p. 833) The observation Miles and Paddison (2005) made over a decade ago is still valid for entrepreneurial cities, with ample examples in cultural-led waterfront regeneration, urban revitalization and local redevelopment (Eizenberg & Cohen, 2015; Gunay & Dokmeci, 2012; Joo & Park, 2017; Wang, 2009; Zhong, 2016). Tourism often plays an essential in these culture-led initiatives as cities compete in producing and reproducing themselves as spaces for tourism consumption, and tourism-led strategies in turn leads to the serial reproduction of culture (Richards & Wilson, 2006; Rogerson, 2006). Culture- and tourism-led urban regeneration emerged in China in the early 2000s, when the country began to see fast expansion of cultural and creative industries. Most existing research concentrates on the reconfiguration of built environment in the blight industrial land or inner city neighbourhoods, such as the Red Town in Shanghai or the 798 Art Zone in Beijing featuring the re-functioning of dilapidated factories and warehouses (Chou, 2012; He, 2019; Wang, 2009), or the Xintiandi Project featuring the rehabilitation and gentrification of traditional Shanghai neighbourhoods (Wai, 2006).

While most existing studies on culture-led urban development efforts are conducted in the declining inner-city areas, the dynamic and diverse worldwide peri-urban development and transformation deserves much attention from scholars. For example, Lehrer and Laidley (2008) observed that the new type of spectacular cultural mega-projects that proliferate in entrepreneurial cities are also being developed in sub- and exurbia; Knox (2008) wrote about the master-planned communities in American suburbs, which were intended to enact consumption-oriented lifestyles, underpinned by the dreams of increasingly affluent consumers on the demand side. Phelps (2012) pointed to the emerging suburban creative economies in the UK that are rested on the high-quality amenities and highly skilled population in suburbs. In East Asia, while the inner cities are long considered as consumer and cultural centre, it is argued that the previous industrial led peri-urbanization has become increasingly driven by consumption, with the rise of the middle class and new lifestyle trends (Webster, Cai, & Muller, 2014). This is particularly true in the wealthier part of China's eastern coast, where manufacturing zones are shifting to "more diversified and complex 'second-generation' peri-urban landscapes" characterized by emerging consumption spaces with leisure and tourism facilities and residential communities (Webster et al., 2014). This fundamental change in character of peri-urban areas have significant implications on

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the land use, the built environment, economic structure and social constructs of the metropolitan region.

Peri-urban transformation in China must be understood within the entrepreneurial state discourse that has been much written about. As Shatkin (2016) argued, across much of urban Asia, and China in particular, dramatic increases in land prices have led state actors to develop new strategies aimed at tapping into real estate markets as a means to gain financial power and greater control over urban spatial change. This is what he called land monetization, which refers to using government powers of land management to realize substantial increases in land values. Under such contexts, studies have examined peri-urban expansion and land use changes with the development of large-scale urban development projects such as university towns (Li, Li, & Wang, 2014; Tian, Ge, & Li, 2017). However, little research paid attention to the significant role of culture and tourism in China's peri-urban transformation under its state entrepreneurialism. This study unveils why and how culture- and tourism-led approach is employed and critically reflects on the implications in China's peri-urban development. In doing so, it makes theoretical contributions to the literature by elaborating the processes and underlying motivations of cultural instrumentisation and urban thematisation in peri-urban development under China's political economic contexts, which is qualitatively different from Western democratic countries.

The research employs a qualitative case study method with two cases of Songjiang and Lingang New Town in peri-urban Shanghai (Fig. 1). The reason for choosing Shanghai is not because it is "representative" of Chinese cities, as qualitative case study methods do not pursue representativeness. Rather, Shanghai is a typical case with prominent culture-led peri-urban development. It is worth noting that the aim of presenting two cases is not to conduct a comparative study in a strict sense, rather, it is to show a diversity of development experiences with contextual-specific motives and consequences, hence enriching the article. Primary data were acquired from field trips in Shanghai in August 2012 and May to June 2013, during which twelve indepth interviews were conducted with local planners, public officials and urban scholars, each taking half an hour to 1 h. Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted in 2014 and 2016. The researcher also made repetitive visits to the study sites to observe the development and chat with local people. Substantial planning documents obtained from local planning institutes and online media news are used as secondary data to facilitate the analysis. The following part will begin with conceptual reviews regarding cultural instrumentisation, tourism and thematisation in urban (re)development in the Western context and then critically examine the culture-led approach employed in the two new towns in Shanghai in detail.

2. Culture, tourism, and urban development in an entrepreneurial city

2.1. Culture as an instrument for urban (re)development

'Culture' has become the key to urban regeneration in the Western world, which can be traced back to the 1970s, when the first major redevelopment projects began to use cultural facilities, such as museums, concert halls, theatres and cinemas, to improve the image of run- down urban districts (Bayliss, 2004). Culture and tourism are intrinsically linked as Zukin (1996) observed that "culture is more and more the business of cities—the basis of their tourist attractions and their unique, competitive edge."(P1) In these culture-led initiatives, culture is defined in the broadest sense as heritage, arts, or as a way of life (e.g., leisure, shopping, eating and entertainment). The shift of consumption behaviour to postmodern consumerism, which put a much stronger emphasis upon differentiation, aesthetics and symbolic meaning, explains much culture-related entrepreneurial policy and strategy and has important implications for the production and transformation of urban spaces. As the economy moves towards post-Fordism and the cultural-aesthetic trend moves towards post-modernism, citizens need a distinctive urban space from the Fordist Era (Harvey, 1987). Faced with interurban competition and the collapse of the industrial economy, entrepreneurial urban governments are forced into creating and investing in innovation of urban space to make their cities more attractive as consumer and cultural centres. Place needs to "offer consumers a spatial experience that is an attraction by itself. People… come there to see and be seen" (Gottdiener, 2000: 284). Consequently, it is argued that 'culture' is increasingly valued as a planning instrument capable of producing difference in urban space, not only for denizens but more importantly, for money-packed tourists (Krivy, 2013). In particular, Krivy (2013) pointed out how administrative practices employing culture as a tool in realizing specific administrative objectives whereby "'culture' is justified as important for something (urban development, regional growth) and plays a key role in something (economic performance, attracting human capital)." (p. 6).

Within the instrumental thinking of culture, Scott (2004) particularly emphasized the understanding of the potential of culture as an economic driving force through cultural-products industries. The consumption-based cultural strategies attempting to manipulate symbolic assets for place marketing and economic growth, according to Scott (2004), should be concerned as the first-generation practices. This type of place-based policy intervention for competition is criticized to be a zero-sum game, seeking for growth at the expense of other places without increasing the total amount of available investment (Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008). Therefore, scholars in cultural economy have called for the second-generation policy vision "directed less to the selling of places in the narrow sense than to the physical export of local cultural products to markets all over the world" (p. 465), advocating a shift of focus from cultural consumption to cultural production (Scott, 2004). With the rise of creative industries or cultural-products industries, it is argued that the cultural industries are "one of the potential motors of urban growth and regeneration in their own right" (Pratt, 2008) (p. 107). More recently, following Florida's (2002) thesis on creative city, the term 'creativity' has increasingly replaced 'culture' in the regeneration projects around the globe. 'Creative districts', 'creative clusters' and the 'creative class' have come to occupy a central position in urban development agenda. As Richards and Wilson (2007) commented "every city seems to want to position itself at the leading edge of creative development, attracting creative producers, wooing creative consumers and consolidating a higher position in the rankings of 'creative cities'" (p. 12). However, while emphasizing production, the shift from culture to creativity does not necessarily avoid the pitfall of consumption-based intervention. Miles (2010) argued that for the creative class thesis, creativity is underpinned by notions of consumption in the sense that it is opportunities for consumption city provides that really appeal to the creative classes, and the process inevitably lead to a divisive post-industrial city that create disparities and exacerbate social polarization between the elite and local communities. In this sense, the creative class thesis can be regarded as a part of the entrepreneurialism agenda framed around interurban competition, middle class consumption, gentrification, and place marketing (Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008). Citing Smith (2005), Rogerson (2006) pointed out that creative industries are used increasingly "as tools for the regeneration and transfiguration of urban spaces of consumption" (p. 23). Therefore, as with the instrumental role of 'culture', 'creativity' also becomes instrumental in mobilizing a population towards production of economic values, which is strategically imported into the realm of administration (Krivy, 2013).

2.2. Urban tourism and thematisation

In the context of the instrumentalization of culture and creativity, culture- and tourism-led urban (re)development aims to enhance the 'imageability' of the city (McCarthy, 2002), projecting the city as a

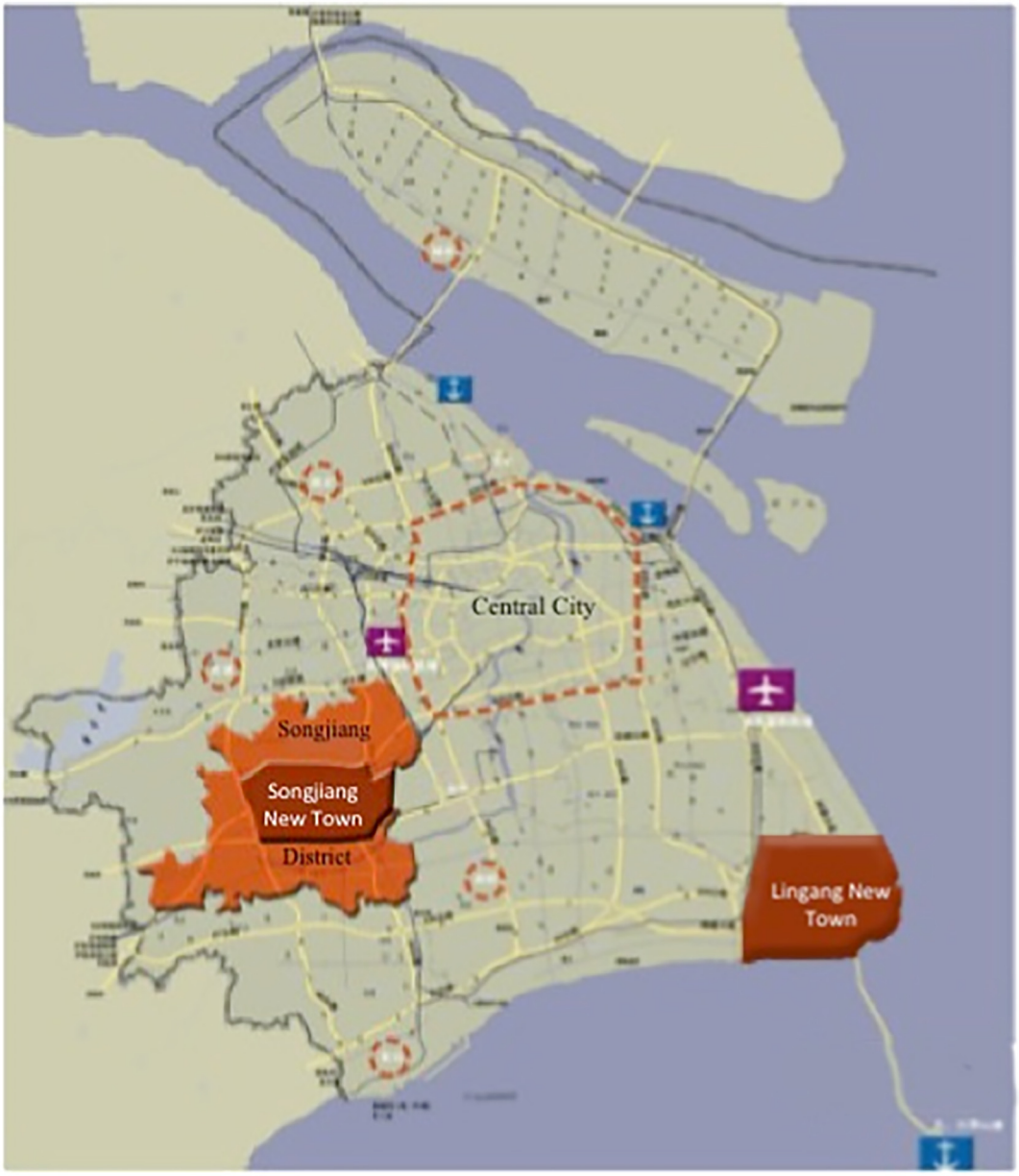

Fig. 1. Location of Songjiang and Lingang New Town in Peri-Urban Shanghai. Source: original figure from SUPDRI, edited by the author.

dreamscape of visual consumption, as people expect to experience the heritage, architecture, and culture that are unique to the city. This is linked to cultural tourism, which is no longer merely the visual consumption of high culture artifacts but is expanding to include "simply allowing visitors the opportunity of soaking up the atmosphere of the place" (Gezici & Kerimoglu, 2010). Hence, places are not only increasingly being restructured as centres for consumption, but also places themselves are consumed, particularly visually. In older cities, their own heritage signifying the past becomes a valuable element for place marketing. As Knox recognised, historic preservation well fits into the postmodernity context, because historic buildings and districts represent distinctiveness and identity to both residents and tourists, which is in accordance with a postmodern culture that emphasizes the past, the vernacular and the decorative (Knox, 1993). In places that lack a marketable historic past, themed environments have emerged, with the well-known examples of Disneyland and Las Vegas (Judd & Fainstein, 1999). "Thematisation" has become one of the main strategies for urban regeneration, which involves cities seeking to distinguish themselves by focusing on a specific theme, such as culture, sport, arts or entertainment (McCarthy, 2002; Swarbrooke, 2000). The growing thematisation of urban landscapes means that experience and reality are being virtualised, produced, and simulated but also manipulated, monitored, and controlled (Schmid, 2006).

However, culture- and tourism-led urban regeneration incurs much doubts and controversies in its commodification of culture and creation of privatized spaces excluding the social milieu (Fainstein, 2008). As cultural products are specifically designed for tourist consumption, commodification is, to some extent, unavoidable, since cultural products are specifically designed for tourist consumption (Richards, 1996). Miles and Paddison (2005) also commented that "the development of cultural forms of urban tourism is the commodification of culture and the spread of cultural capitalism" (p. 834). It is argued that culture-led regeneration should have an explicit commitment to revitalize the cultural, social and political life of local communities by putting emphasis on the benefit it brings to the quality of life, social cohesion, and community development (Gunay & Dokmeci, 2012).

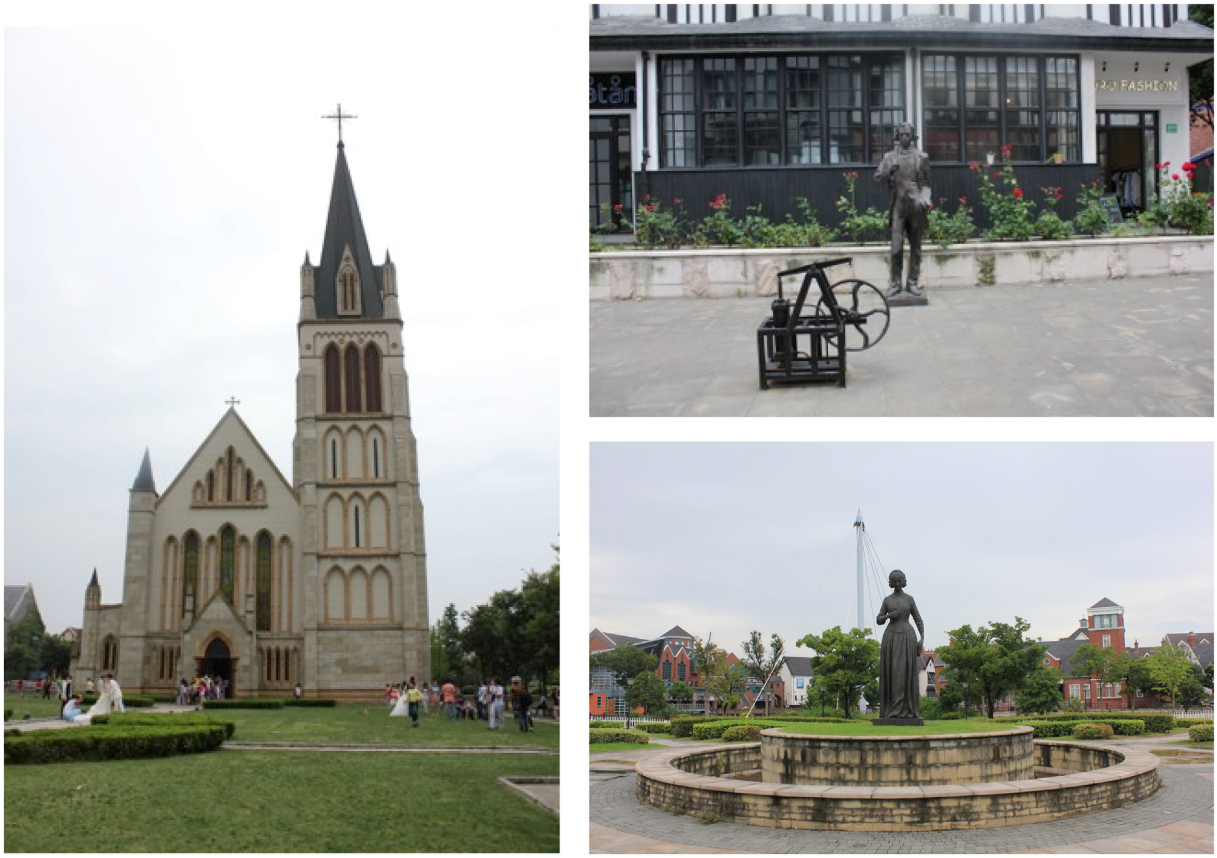

Fig. 2. British cultural elements in Thames Town - church and statues.
Source: photographed by the author.

However, in reality, they often prioritize economic development goals, property development, and urban entrepreneurialism, rather than to the quality of life goals, the protection of local identities, social justice or inclusion (Jensen, 2007).

The above theoretical insights provide an important analytical framework to study China's cases. However, those observations are made in more developed countries, whose development stages and political economics contexts diverse significantly from China. In particular, under China's party-state system, peri-urban development is dominated by an alliance between local governments and their affiliated development and investment corporations, whose aims are not only making profits but also fulfilling political tasks from its upper-level government (Li & Chiu, 2018). The following section will elaborate culture-led peri-urban development in Shanghai within its specific local economic contexts.

3. Culture-led peri-urban development in Shanghai

Up until the 1990s, Shanghai maintained the image of an industrial city. However, a decade later, with economic and industrial restructuring and the rise of middle class, the major economic sector of the city has transformed from manufacturing to the service industry. Recent developments show that the city has put cultural industry and tourism in its major development agenda. Increasingly, creative city visions are being "integrated into the language of international competition for creative talent and place competitiveness" (Keane, 2007). In 2005, the *11th Five-Year Plan for Creative Industries Development in Shanghai* was officially proposed with the aim of developing 'Creative Shanghai' and establishing the most influential cultural and creative centre in Asia. The Shanghai Municipality launched the Shanghai Creative Industry Centre (SCIC) in January 2005, marking the official recognition of cultural and creative industries as a key industry sector to be developed in Shanghai. Preferential policies such as tax reduction are granted to cultural and creative industrial zones in Shanghai. The cultural and creative industry policy in Shanghai has significant implications on its peri-urban development, together with the launch of the New Town Program in the early 2000s. Essentially, the new town program in Shanghai is an entrepreneurial urban development strategy in response to the intensified inter-urban competition and globalization, aiming to equip the metropolitan area with new urban spaces and new growth capacity.

3.1. Thames Town in Songjiang New Town: harnessing 'British culture' to create an enchanted landscape

The Songjiang New Town is located at the urban fringe 40 km to the southwest of Shanghai's central city and situates at the centre of the Songjiang District. Before the new town program, Songjiang had been an industrial satellite town of Shanghai, hosting the Songjiang Industrial Zone developed in the early 1990s. With intensive development and construction since 2000, the landscapes of this peri-urban area have been changed dramatically, from mixed industrial and rural settlements to a modern city characterized by the co-existence of industrial development zones, property-led initiatives, and symbolic mega-projects. University towns, business district with office buildings, and large-scale cultural projects have been planned and developed within the new town, in addition to the extensive development of housing estates.

3.1.1. Marketing the new town with exotic landscape – Thames Town as an 'authentic British town'

Located in the west of Songjiang, Thames Town is one of the earliest

culture-led mega-project developed in the new town, occupying a total area of 1 km^2. The projects of Thames Town vividly present how Western culture is manipulated to create a new type of urban space in peri-urban Shanghai. Thames Town comprises nine residential neighbourhoods, commercial zones, public squares, and man-made rivers and lakes, aiming to offer an ideal living environment with high-quality housing and first-class services, all with 'authentic British flavour'. A number of design details were adopted to make it look more 'authentic British': the spired Cathedral in the centre square, British-style architecture beside the 'Thames River', an ersatz castle by a man-made lake, and red brick warehouses on the waterfront evoking the prosperous industrial age of Great Britain. British style is not only suggested by architecture but also by other British cultural elements, such as statues of great English historical figures, including William Shakespeare, Winston Churchill, Florence Nightingale, and Princess Diana (Fig. 2). British names for the neighbourhoods are also used to indicate a British lifestyle: Victoria Garden, Hampton Manor, Nottingham Oasis, etc. Together, the British style architecture and other cultural elements make Thames Town a themed urban setting, a faux 'authentic' place offering an exotic feel. It has long been recognised as an upscale residential community, a 'master-planned community' that shares the key features of mixed-use, security and aesthetics (Shen & Wu, 2012). This is similar to the Las Vegas case where themed environment is meticulously designed to shape place identity. The project was not initiated by real estate developers for global imagineering as a means of niche marketing (Wu, 2006), but was originated from a municipal government proposal that peri-urban new towns in Shanghai should learn from Western experience in urban planning and design and avoid the low-quality and monotonous buildings. Therefore, the harness of British culture was a completely top-down process to cater to the government's yearning for distinctive urban landscapes that's different from the socialist past.

By creating an enchanted themed space with simulated elements, Thames Town has quickly drawn the attention of the media and the mass public to the Songjiang New Town. With its 'original British landscape' and 'authentic British flavour', the project has become effective advertising for the city, successfully marketing Songjiang to the public as a place for unique, exciting, and high-quality living. Within a short time, it has become a hot spot for sightseeing and photography and a popular place to hold public events in Songjiang, such as ceremonies or exhibitions. More importantly, to the new town manager and local government, Thames Town would not only be an upscale residential area, but also take the lead in improving the quality of the living environment as well as boosting housing development in adjacent areas (Li & Chiu, 2018; Shen & Wu, 2012). Its developer and manager – Songjiang New Town Development Corporation (SNTDC) – was not only in charge of this single project but also responsible for the development and land leasing in the broader Songjiang New Town. To them, "Thames Town is only a small area in Songjiang. We want it to be a bright spot so that the returns in its surrounding area would increase" (Interview, 8 June 2013). With a decade of development, Thames Town has gone beyond globalized local space intended for people with international connections (Chen, Wang, & Kundu, 2009), and progressed into a new type of urban space that inspires innovation and opens new market for cultural production and consumption.

3.1.2. From enchanted landscape to cultural production and consumption

Thames Town was initially envisioned as a residential community and economic activities were not explicitly formed at the start. However, after 2006, when most of the housing units were sold out but not so much occupied, SNTDC began to consider the possibility of economic activity development in Thames Town to avoid becoming a "ghost town" (Interview, 8 June 2013). Initially, this was out of a pragmatic consideration for leasing its commercial properties. While residential units in Thames Town sold well from the start, the commercial properties had a hard time attracting tenants. The first few years after the opening of Thames Town, it was criticized as a ghost town with few residents and visitors, and most of the properties were sold as holiday homes. Faced with the difficulties, feasible solutions to make use of the commercial estates were needed. The idea of developing cultural and creative industries in Thames gradually came into being to SNTDC managers, as they expected that the exotic themed environment would be appealing to artists and cultural workers. Such development can be traced back to the launch of *the First Visual Art Square* in Thames Town in 2006, which was a creative industrial zone jointly established by the Shanghai Institute of Visual Art of Fudan University and the Shanghai Media and Entertainment Group. Within four years, the creative cluster made significant progress and was renamed *Thames Creative Industrial Cluster* in 2010. In 2011, Thames Town was granted the status of *Shanghai Cultural Industrial Zone* by the Shanghai municipal government. Thus, with the support from the government and taking advantage of its thematisation of the built environment, Thames Town became an important place for cultural and creative industrial development in Shanghai. The transformation of Thames Town from a suburban residential community to a cultural and creative industrial zone was an intentional strategy and conscious effort of the SNTDC. As the vice president of SNTDC who is in charge of the cultural creative industrial zone of Thames Town revealed in the interview:

> "*We intend to change the perceived image of Thames Town in the public. Previously, the public considered Thames Town as a residential community, with residential as its only function. Now we are promoting the slogan 'Art in Thames, Romance in Thames, Leisure in Thames, Fashion in Thames'. It is not only residential, but also for those seeking art, romance and fashion. Actually the English expression 'In Thames' has a double meaning – it means inside Thames, but the word 'In' also means being fashionable and trendy.*"
>
> (Interview, 8 June 2013, translated by the author)

With the intentional effort from the SNTDC and the support from the municipality, Thames Town has evolved beyond the master-planned community featuring high-quality living into an important place for cultural and creative industrial development in Shanghai. Within five years, a variety of design studios, art galleries, and other types of creativity-based companies were set up in Thames Town. By the end of 2012, there were 92 creative companies registered in the industrial zone (according to a report of Songjiang Municipal People's Congress in 2013). Clearly in this case, themed environment is created and harnessed to attract the 'creative class' and to stimulate the production of cultural and creative products. However, most of the art galleries have failed in a few years' time. According to related news reports, the high rent is the main problem. With increasing popularity, the rent in Thames Town becomes too high for artists to afford. Another problem is the lack of preferential policy treatment such as tax exemption, resulting in its poor competitiveness in attracting and supporting artists and cultural actors compared with other creative and cultural industry zones in Shanghai. In addition, according to the interview, the lack of a complete industrial chain for art industry is also a major problem. For example, the lack of brokers and auctions makes the artists' works hard to sell (Interview, 8 June 2013).

Having realized the problems of art and cultural development in Thames Town, the managers of the cultural industry zone changed their strategy from promoting culture production to culture consumptions. With its carefully designed and decorated stylish bars, restaurants, cafés, and retail shops, the theming of British culture with Western lifestyle have always been its marketing point. Taking advantage of the post-modern consumerism turn, the SNTDC saw perfect timing for Thames Town to provide a new type of consumption space just as people were becoming bored by those standardized and highly predicable places. Consumers could expect surprises when wandering in the outlets or relaxing in a café, because they might come across special Spanish handicrafts, or British souvenirs that were carefully selected by

the owners. SNTDC carefully regulated all commercial activities and even decoration styles of the shops to guarantee the 'unique experience', which strategy could be described as successful as Thames Town attract increasing number of visitor and tourists in recent years. It presents a unique case whereby what Scott (2004) called 'second-generation' cultural policy featuring cultural production was adopted at first but was then 'degraded' into the 'first-generation' cultural consumption practices.

3.2. Lingang: vitalizing the peripheral new town with tourism-led mega-projects

Lingang New Town, 75 km to the southeast of Shanghai central city, presents another type of new town that is developed from scratch without any previous urban settlements. The designation of Lingang is more of a strategic consideration to facilitate the development of Yangshan deep sea port, which is designed to be the biggest container port in China. Over the past decade, the first phase of Lingang New Town has completed, transforming the vacant land into a modern city. However, it experienced only marginal population growth, and the new town was faced with great difficulties in bringing the community into fruition with comprehensive urban functions. As the first phase of development completed, the imperative task was to decide how to develop the rest area of 55km^2 in a way that could solve the tough problems of introducing population, increasing land value, and most importantly, cultivating diverse and vibrant urban functions. Under such context, it was believed that adopting a more integrated and culture- and tourism-led mega-project development approach was the most efficient ways to achieve numerous economic, social, and cultural needs simultaneously, and to effectively utilize private capital and expertise in urban development (Interview, 30 May 2013). This mega-project based development strategy view tourism and cultural-related activities as the major vehicle in creating city vibrancy and animation, as well as in stimulating urban physical development and inflating the land value, boosting the confidence of potential investors in its currently glooming land market (Interview, 30 May 2013). Two cultural-led mega-projects were planned in Lingang New Town: the Polar Ocean World (POW) and the Mega Studio City (Fig. 3). The following section will focus on the POW project to analyze its role in peri-urban development.

The theme park 'Polar Ocean World' is one of the major mage-project that local managers brought into Lingang. Similar to the Disneyland, POW is a standardized theme park with 'the polar and ocean' as its theme, and the rides, shows, and exhibition of sea animals as its attractions. Planned in the East of Lingang, the entertainment-led mega-project is expected to become a major destination for leisure and tourism, and to facilitate achieving the goal in the master plan of developing Lingang into a tourism city. 'Cultural tourism' is heavily emphasized in its plan by proposing that "cultural tourism should be the featured brand, with culture leading tourism and tourism promoting culture" and "establish the image of a cultural tourism city by developing art performances, themed entertainment, and creative activities".[1] Spatially, the whole project is divided into three functional zones. With the theme park as its core, a business district and an ecological living district are planned as ancillary functions to cultural tourism. In the planning, besides the commodified leisure and entertainment activities, what have been given special emphases are the cultural and creative industries that to be developed based on the theme park. It is expected that a variety of commercial and service functions can be fostered including advertising, consulting, training, as well as shopping, dining, and other living related functions. The project is envisaged as "the creative highland for Shanghai to develop its experience economy, the cultural window for Shanghai to develop into a world city, and an enjoyable resort for leisure and entertainment".[1] However, the notion of 'cultural tourism' used in its planning documents is more like a propaganda slogan without any real content in what culture or whose culture. While cultural tourism values an authentic experience rooted in local history, heritage, and culture, the theme park planned in Lingang actually promotes a kind of standardized experience catering to the mass tourists. It represents a typical 'style over content' (Richards & Wilson, 2007) case as it could be anywhere and represent little of local culture.

The introduction of the POW into Lingang New Town with expected massive physical and economic development represents the notion of 'entertainment-led development' in the West, which has become a popular strategy for the entrepreneurial cities searching for growth. However, while it is taken by policy makers as 'development panacea' on their pro-growth agenda, its cost must be critically reflected. While the entertainment-led mega-project is located in newly developed area, and thus will not lead to direct displacement of previously residents as shown in other studies (McCarthy, 2002), the influence of the large number of tourists and visitors on the everyday city life of local residents is an issue that need to be concerned. In addition, a local planner also commented that "these mega-projects would segment the original functional zones and cause traffic fracture" (Interview, 24 May 2013). The initiative of this entertainment oriented mega-project is clearly associated with imperatives for creative industrial development and positioning the city as an international tourism city as planned in the '12th Five-Year Plan for Tourism' in Shanghai, together with the Disneyland Park that was under development at that time. After years of planning and construction, the POW Park was opened to the public in September 2018. The completed project provides exhibition halls, 4-D cinemas and interactive shows for tourists to learn about polar life, which to some extent resembles creative tourism that is "active rather than passive, about learning rather than looking" (Richards, 2005). However, the cultural and creative industries initially planned for this project have hardly been materialized. Similar to Songjiang, the 'second generation' cultural production effort was again reduced to 'first generation' cultural consumption that is based on thrills, performances and souvenirs. The nexus between creativity and tourism established in its planning document and the positioning of a cultural theme was merely a rhetoric to legitimate the project, used as a tool for mega-project development and transfiguration of urban space for consumption, as argued by Smith (2005).

4. Discussion

Engaged with the literature on the cultural instrumentisation, urban thematisation and the rise of urban enterpreneurialism, this paper provides detailed explanation on why and how culture-led projects planned and developed in Shanghai peri-urban areas, transforming the previous industrial and semi-rural landscapes into what cater to the rising expectations of the emerging consumer class in urban China. Unlike old city centres, peri-urban areas are usually absence of history and heritage. Culture and creativity are thus created through thematisation and intentional manipulation of the built environment. They are used as means to stimulate physical development and add to the imaginability of the urban peripheries for economic purposes. As the finance of urban development in China is largely dependent on revenue from land selling, culture was instrumentised for property development, for economic growth, and for attracting visitors, but never for the sake of culture itself. Tourism has become a central part of this creative development to bring new income into the city. Research in other contexts revealed that the culture-led urban space transformation could be for the purposes of achieving social inclusion, promoting community participation and (re) shaping local identities (Degen & García, 2012; Gibson & Stevenson, 2004). In China, however, the government prioritizes growth and economic considerations while little social objectives

[1] Internal planning documents from Shanghai Urban Planning and Design Research Institute (2013).

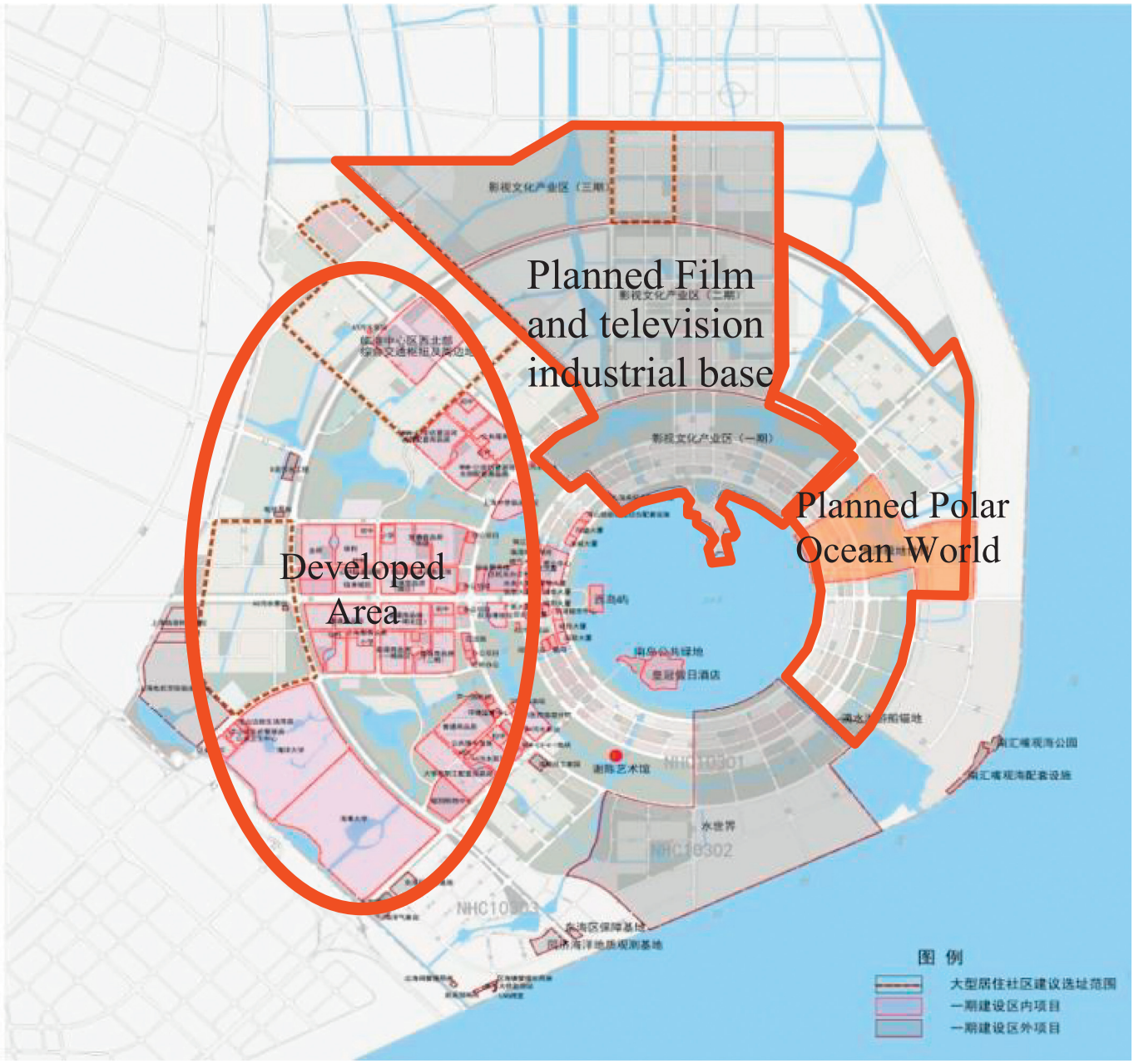

Fig. 3. Location of two culture-led projects planned in Lingang.
Source: Original figure from SUPDRI, edited by the author.

are observed in the planning of culture-led development.

In both cases, cultural-led development was expected to foster new industries to generate economic growth for the new towns, however, both were eventually reduced to consumption-based interventions rested on leisure and tourism. As Keane (2009) in a study of China's creative clusters has incisively pointed out: “it is not the creativity or the networks of interaction that fund this wave of construction; it is the production and sale of tourist commodities … The end results have been an increase in land value and rents”(p. 228). This is true for many creative industries zones in China, which have seen extensive set up of stylish cafés, bars, and shopping outlets, but less office and studios for creative industrial production. Many of such zones have eventually become commercial estates—the call for culture and creativity is only to boost the price of the estates. Once the area is animated and become popular place for leisure and shopping, cultural and creative industries are more and more marginalized. This observation reflected what Scott (2004) warned that cultural creative industrial clusters cannot succeed by simple political will or fiscal prodigality, and that “blunt top-down approaches focused on directive planning are unlikely in and of themselves accomplish much at the local scale”(p. 477).

The harness of British culture for thematisation presented an Oriental counter-version of the rise of ethnoscapes in the West, where multicultural districts are developed and marketed as new destinations for leisure and tourism (Shaw, Bagwell, & Karmowska, 2004). As Shaw et al. (2004) revealed, in Europe and North America, those ethnoscapes such as China Town are visually appealing to visitors who seek out goods and services that they value as exotic, with its deliberate decoration accentuating the romance of the Oriental through lanterns, dragons and other imageries. Thames Town, in contrast, demonstrate a fake ‘authentic British Town’ with a variety of meticulously designed British elements that appeal to the young group and rising middle class who value the exotic British townscape and experience as fashionable

and distinctive. Such urban thematisation endeavour that emphasis upon capitalization of exotic culture for tourism are criticized by David Harvey as speculative in nature, as they focus on the speculative construction of place rather than amelioration of conditions within a particular territory as its immediate political and economic goal (Harvey, 1989).

5. Conclusion

In Europe and North America, cultural facilities and cultural/creative industries have been linked to the regeneration of old industrial towns since the 1980s, which also involves strong leisure and retail elements with provision of cafés, bars bookstores and design shops (O'Connor & Gu, 2014). Similar initiatives emerged in China since 2000s, mostly focused on the regeneration of run down neighbourhoods and dilapidated factories. This paper for the first time examined the role of culture and tourism in peri-urban development in Shanghai. Based on findings from this research, three policy recommendations can be formulated. Firstly, local decision makers put genuine efforts in fostering a creative milieu rather than simply relying on the thematisation of built environment. This involves a more tolerant environment on cultural and artistic production and encouragement of bottom-up initiatives in the administrative realm. Secondly, SCIC needs sufficient understanding of the real dynamics and needs of the cultural creative sector, avoiding "the inappropriateness (or absence) of services, no understanding of how to select and mix tenants, badly designed space and inappropriate locations" (O'Connor & Gu, 2014) (p. 8). Thirdly, it is necessary to make changes to the incentives of local development and investment corporations to avoid their overly reliance on profiting from land selling and property investment.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Jie Li: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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