Producing Space, Producing China: A Critical Intervention

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Abstract

The concepts of the production and representation of space and place are receiving an increasing amount of attention in both the humanities and the social sciences. This paper will use the theoretical knowledge that has and continues to be produced on the subject to come to a better understanding of the spatial origins that constitute the place that is Chinese nation state. The analysis of spatial practises should shed light on the question what China is and wherefrom it receives the legitimacy for its social-spatial integrity.

It will be argued that the arrival of modernity and its universal measurement of time and space were essential components in the gradual transformation from ethnocentric place to a territorially defined nation state. The political production and organisation of space employed for the formation of the nation state is argued to be the consequence of the same (globalising) logic that is now said to question and undermine its territorial integrity. Modernity and globalisation are in this paper, in other words, considered to be similar, if not identical, spatial-temporal concepts that both help to create and destruct places.

This is arguably best visible in the constant production and reproduction of the most sophisticated of spatial organisations: our cities. I will argue that despite the changing face of cities, of which the disputed contemporary "globalisation" is but one of many, the spatial reality that *is* the modern nation state remains the same. This is not to return to an orthodox realist interpretation but to understand the very "stuff" that space and place are made of.

Keywords: Globalisation, modernity, space, place, China

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INTRODUCTION

When we think of China or Chinese (or any other "country" or citizenry for that matter), we tend to think about the territorial demarcated space that one recognises as the "country", its "cities" or the "national culture" that flourishes "there". It is difficult to avoid spatial metaphors such as these, which Lefebvre (1991) describes as the "representations of space", to describe the identities of modern citizens. The significance of place and our relation to it goes however further back than the territorial creation of the nation state. The old Hebrew name for G-d[2], *HaMakom* (literally "place"), is for instance testimony to the importance that the older, non-modern civilisations attached to the omnipotent nature of place[3]. We live, act and even experience our memories (Halbwachs 1980) in such "unmediated" places. This is what Lefebvre (1991) calls "representational space" or "lived (*véçu*) space" and resembles the kind of space described by Gaston Bachelard (1969) in his "poetics of space".

This archaic relationship between being and place, described by Heidegger (1996) as simply *dasein* (translated here as "being in place"), will form the basis for understanding how the production of "representations of space" ("conceived" (*conçu*) space) has led to the perceived (*perçu*) naturalness of the space that is the modern Chinese nation state[4]. I will, in other words, challenge the still very much accepted idea that perceived space (i.e. the effect

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[2] The full naming of a deity is circumvented in Jewish traditions to avoid the risk of defacing the deity's omnipotence.

[3] See Casey (2009) for a more elaborate analysis on the origins and relevance to analysis of place of the word *HaMakom*.

[4] The triangular spatial relation which Lefebvre (1991) proposes contains three epistemological modes for analysing space. These modes also have an ontological counterpart. The lived space (or "representational space") is in my understanding the space of Heidegger's polis and is sometimes described by Lefebvre as the subjective or imaginary space. The second concept or mode of space (i.e. "representations of space") is conceived mentally and contains a certain rationality or Cartesian logic that is visible in geometric cartography or modern urban planning. The third dimension or "perceived space" is the space that is taken for granted in the everydayness. "Each aspect of this three-part dialectic is in a relationship with the other two. Altogether they make up 'space'" (Shields 1998: 161).

of modern (re)production of space) is the silent or static product of the social modes of production. The questioning of *what space is* will start from a position in which this form of "rational" spatial planning and organisation is conceptualised as older than contemporary and conventional analyses of modernity seem to suggest. The "spatial reality", which it shaped by this relation to place, is equipped to be more than the passive receiving product of social relations and therefore has a more vital role to play in the way we think about being in place.

It will be argued that the spatial organisation of the city in 20th and 21th century China transcended a particular spatial logic which dates back to the earliest foundations of the Chinese nation state. The establishment of the national territorial place, which is the Chinese nation state, needs however to be historicised (and consequentially materialised) to understand how an abstractly conceived idea of space could gradually become synonymous to the perception of a very real China. The fact that the real is socially constructed should not deter us from understanding how and on what basis it was constructed historically. The question how contemporary globalisation has impacted China will be answered by looking somewhat more to the past rather than to the present.

This paper will focus on the role of the production of space and the representation of place with reference to the creation and integral preservation of the Chinese nation state. The first section will provide a theoretical account of the notions of space and place. Here I will rely mainly on philosophical ideas proposed by Martin Heidegger (1996), Henri Lefebvre (1991; 1996) and Edward Casey (1997; 2009). I will conceptualise globalisation as the pre-condition of modernity or what Heidegger describes as the defining characteristic of "the world as a picture" (*Weltbild*)[5]. In the second half of this section I wish to provide a very short historical background of the way in which being in place was considered before the arrival of a modern (and global) form of "spatial reality".

The second section will then employ these understandings to come to terms with the creation of the nation state during the Qing (1644-1911) period. I will mainly look at cartographic and architectural projects (i.e. presentations of space) of the Qing to defend the thesis that "China" was already long in the process of becoming modern (i.e. a nation state

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[5] Heidegger (1977: 91, 94, own translation, emphasis added) explains that "the fact that the world becomes picture at all is what distinguishes the essence of the modem age [der *Neuzeit*]… The word "picture" [*Bild*] now means the structured image [*Gebild*] that is the creature of man's producing which represents and sets before.... [Being in the world] is placed in the realm of man's knowing and of his having disposal, and that it is in being only in this way… Man becomes the representative [der *Repräsentant*] of that which is, in the sense of that which has the character of object" (see Heidegger and Grene 1976 for an alternative English translation and ; see Heidegger 1977 for the original text in German).

as we know China today) before its encounter with the "West" during the Macartney Mission (1793) and/or the Opium Wars (1839 to 1842, 1856 to 1860). The manner in which space was conceived at that time, in other words, created the condition for a new political organisation which was embedded in the integration of a new perception of space.

The third section will then analyse how the productions and organisations of modern space during the Republican (1912-1949) and first People's Republic of China (PRC) period (1949-1978) were again employed by respectively the Guomindang (GMD) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to forge a perceptual unitary legitimacy for political rule. The construction of modern cities played a fundamental role in this regard. Here space was conceived, along similar lines to the presentations of space in the previous period, to disseminate the perceived unitary space (*territory*) of the nation state.

The fourth section will focus on the period after 1978 to describe how the entry of market forces has not so much radically altered as expanded the presentation of and logic underpinning modern urban place. This section poses the thesis that although post-modernity as the product of a capitalist globalisation shapes and conceives space and time differently, the relationship between the modern being and the perceived place that is the nation state was in fact interdependent. The conclusion will then shortly summarise the main findings and will highlight some issues that might be worthy of further research on the topics discussed.

THE POLITICS OF PLACE

Repoliticising space

The importance ascribed to the concept of place derives from its ability to connect space and time according to the logic of the social relations that it embeds. "We are in the lecture theatre". The lecture theatre is the "place" "where" we are "now"; "yesterday" we were not "here". The lecture theatre is thus the place where "time" and "space" come together (even if we are not "there", we can remember the "place" in the "past" or dream about it in the "future")[6]. The purpose of the lecture theatre as a "place" is however also socially constructed. It has a timeless form and specific function and without its socially accepted definition it would not be the "same place" (i.e. the lecture theatre). The lecture theatre also transforms the idea of who we are. We suddenly become students, teachers or simple

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[6] Harman argues in a different, Husserlian manner for a remaking of the Kantian object and the subject relation through an "intentional relation" which can be real "enough to call the relationship an object" (2010: 9).

visitors of an empty lecture theatre. The same can be said of the place that is the nation state ("territory") which transforms humans into citizens of one state into citizens or strangers (e.g. tourists, expats etc) from another nation state place. The representations of space and time are in such an understanding socially constructed abstractions that are mediated and transcended through different places.

Place and its relationship to being is therefore a universal concept which we can apply indiscriminately to all socially embedded *situat*ions (a word which at least in the English language has increasingly become temporal). The principle is that the relationship between being and place (literally "emplacement") is mutually inclusive and automatically results in the construction of a spatially bounded history (Casey 1997). History is therefore as much a spatial as a temporal experience. Our relationship to a place is for that reason mutually reinforcing; without place we would not be and without being there in place, a place would not be (in neither time nor space).

The city (as a place consisting of many other places) becomes then a "discourse and this discourse is truly a language: the city speaks to its inhabitants, we speak to our city, the where we are, simply by living in it, by wandering through it, by looking at it" (Barthes 1997: 168). The modern production of urban space into a common place requires however a universally conceivable language for all beings to understand. This transfiguring process makes the production of space an inherently and inevitably political enterprise.

The modern abstractions (e.g. nationality ["Chinese"], country ["China"], continental ["Asia"], city ["Beijing"], culture ["oriental"] etc) that we now uncritically employ in our everyday vocabularies bypass and undervalue the inherent politics and the history that is embedded in these geographical and often anthropological connotations. The focus is, to paraphrase Heidegger's critique on Cartesian metaphysics, too much on "beings" rather than "Being" (*dasein*) (Heidegger 1996). The emphasis we give to the products of our modern spatial ontology (i.e. the modern triangulation of Lefebvre's [1991] *perceived*, *conceived* and *lived* space) blurs the path to a common understanding of what it means to be in place.

For the old Greeks the polis (πόλις) "was [instead] that which was absolutely worthy of question, and yet for the modern mind … the "political" is unquestioned: not in terms of its content, but in terms of its essence" (Elden 2000: 408; see also Elden 2001). The historical evolution of the production, representation and organisation of space become in such a mode of analysis, in other words, the preferred instrument for understanding the places (national territories, regions, cities etc) that are now seen as the unquestionable and taken for granted objects and consequences of the way we conceive and perceive space. The

deconstructing of space to a level of human "existence" allows us, in other words, to repoliticise all products and representations of space or as Elden writes "there is a politics of space because *politics is spatial*" (Elden 2000: 419, original emphasis).

Being and place (in what was then not China)

This is not to say that the earliest spatial structures found in China were similar to those we know to have existed in ancient Greece. Their spatial-political functioning does however show some interesting ontological similarities. Tu Cheng-Sheng (In Nienhauser 2006: 404, fn. 241) notes for, example, that citizens or *guoren* (translated as "people who dwelt within city walls") in the Spring and Autumn period (770 to 476 BC) played, similar as in the Greek poleis*,* an important political role. Despite the fact that people never took collectively control of the government as was the case in the more direct democratic poleis. Rulers did however often promote public participation to secure a firmer grip on the territories they held and to more easily mobilise a populace in times of territorial expansion. The evolution of early city-states also brought forth an increase in the number of public spaces (especially markets), which is a phenomenon often neglected in the literature on public participation in (ancient) China. Here (similarly as in the Greek *agora*) citizens were given the opportunity to assemble and exchange opinions on political events.
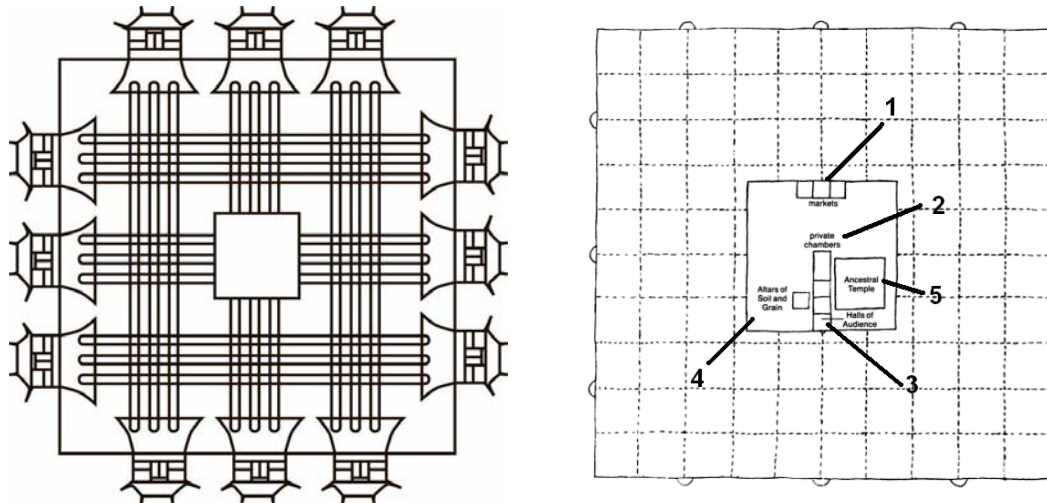
The importance of disciplining the populace became, as a result of the creation of much vaster macro-states, in which cities were integrated, an increasingly urgent matter for the ruling political elites during the Warring States Period (475 to 221 BC)[7]. The new mode of governance, which was much less centralised around the political involvement of the citizens and much more focused on the administrative powers of a centralised bureaucracy, formed a radical departure in the way urban spaces were structured and organised (figure 1). While citizens and the nobles lived together in the old city states, new cities contained inner-walls out of which a social division between the nobility (土 or *shi*) and the citizenry emerged[8]. In

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[7] While cities in the Spring and Autumn Period had populaces of a few thousand, those of the Warring States Period inhabited tens of thousands of inhabitants.

[8] The importance of spatial demarcations has been one of the most striking differences between Western and Chinese cities. The following comes from a Chinese architecture entry in the Encyclopaedia Britannica "There is no real city in China without a surrounding wall, a condition which is indeed expressed by the fact that the Chinese used the same word *cheng* for a city and a city wall; there is no such thing as a city without a wall. It would be just as inconceivable as a house without a roof" (In Turnbull and Noon 2009: 5, original emphasis).

The demarcated nature of the spatial organisation embodies the arrival of a new political-spatial reality which transformed the relation between being and place. While the earlier city characterised itself with the presence of a thick outer wall and a relatively unorganised inner city, the new city was an intensification of many different walls which transformed the city into a giant check board. Central to this new spatial organisation was the nobility and the administrative apparatus, which were

short, the city now came to be divided between an administrative part, a residential and a commercial part. The same sort of development, i.e. the portioning of space into function and social-economic specific social places, is also visible with in Greece with the arrival of the Hippodamian model of town planning (Burns 1976; Paden 2001). The changing physical contours of cities symbolised the onset of a new (urban) "spatial reality" in (what had yet to become) "China" and the "West". This early modern historical development is felt until the present day.

Abstract plan for ideal rulers city (*Wangcheng*) in Steinhardt (1990; see also Zhang 2004).

Rulers city (*Wangcheng*) in Steinhardt (1990, numbering added; , see also Zhang 2004). Legend: 1) markets, 2) private chambers, 3) Halls of Audience, 4) Alters of Soil and Grain, 5) Ancestral temple.

Figure 1: Visualisations of the early "ideal" city from the "Book of Diverse Crafts" (*Kaogongji*)[9,10].

surrounded by a rigid system of residential wards (*li*), that were controlled by ward supervisors (*lizheng*). Yinong Xu informs us that "it is very possible that the urban residents were segregated in different wards by class and by profession" (2000: 69).

[9] The two-dimensional layout of the plans above does not adequately address the importance of the verticality of the actual built space. With the arrival of the new city, a whole new architecture came into existence which consisted of raised platforms (*tai*), pillar gates (*que*), towers (*guan*) and terrace pavilions (*ge*). All of these new forms were soon to cover the skies of the new urban landscape. The "politics of verticality", a term which only recently was coined by the architect Eyal Weizman (2003), introduced "a [new form of] power based on visibility and vision" (Lewis 2006: 153). The visibility of the newly constructed towers however also meant that urban rulers increasingly decided to become less visible to the general population. They instead preferred to remain within the spatial confinements of their centrally located and vertically elevated places of residence. Their presence was however replaced by an always present political and vertical architecture.

[10] The *kaogongji* was composed during the Warring States period and became a complementary part of the Rites of Zhou (*zhouli*). The book provides building instructions for the perfect or ideal capital. The city that came closest to this ideal was Ming Beijing. For a reproduction of the original text (in Chinese) see Zhang (2004) and for contextual analysis see Steinhardt (1990)and Lewis (2006). An English translation is to my knowledge not yet available.

Throughout the whole of the dynastic period, Chinese rulers time and again employed similar spatial (re)organisations to serve their political needs. The production of space helped legitimise those in power to stay in power. The state's monopoly on the production and organisation of space was however never one-directional since other agencies continuously challenged the existing organisation and reality of space. The place of the market for instance had already been contested in times of the Warring States and ultimately forced cities to expand into rural areas during the Song dynasty. The conclusion one could draw is that the tensions existent within society was (and continues to be) played out through the medium of the production of space which transforms itself according to the unfolding of the struggle that underpins its social reality. It was only with the arrival of a universalising modernity (and the nation state) during the Qing period that this struggle over the production of space temporarily came to be resolved.

MODERNITY AND THE CHANGE THAT IT BROUGHT TO THE MEANING OF PLACE AND BEING

The connection between the arrival of modernity and the production of political space(s) is founded on the universalising of time and space. The transition towards the creation of the modern nation state, a spatio-political development which is much more problematic than is often assumed, has considerably accelerated the pace in which space was transformed homogeneously, time successively and place abstractly. To understand how this happened and continues to happen it is worth considering how the "spatial reality" that is so deeply rooted in the (abstract) modern nation state came to inform and reshape "being in place".

The nation state is probably the single institution that most perfectly embodies the impact that the new, modern conceptualisation of time and space had on what was to become society or the "imagined community" (Anderson 2006). Strangers and subjects became "citizens" in this new abstract spatial territory that enforced and adhered to a mode of legitimacy that gradually came to be firmly rooted in the consciousness and organisation of society. The importance of this abstract unity in service of the nation state is however also mediated through the visualisation of a spatially and historically common place in architecture, cartography and later in city planning.

Before the onset of modernity, social belonging to the Chinese Empire and civilisation was ethnocentrically defined on the basis of physical composition or cultural disposition (Dikötter 1994). The ethnographic hierarchical nature of space in the term "middle kingdom" (or "central kingdom" as others prefer to call it) finds its historical correspondences, for example,

in the aforementioned urban planning and in the cartographic representations of a central place in the world (figure 2).
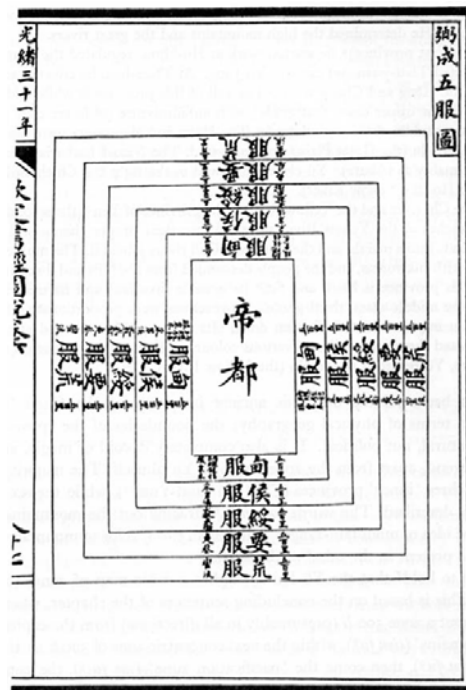

Figure 2: The five dependencies in the *Yu Gong* (a chapter in the *Shujing*) in Needham (1995).

The concentric rings, which radiate outwards away from the inner imperial rectangular domain, organise space in a pre-modern ethnographic manner. The centrality of the imperial centre, which carries extra political weight due to its self-proclaimed relationship with heaven (*tianxia*), legitimises itself as being at the centre of the (square) earth and therefore humanity (see for more Tuan 1990; Dikötter 1994; Needham 1995). The privileging of a certain political place through its centralisation in space is however not something uniquely Chinese, but can also be found in late medieval European cartographic representations that in a similar fashion placed the Holy Land (and later Rome) at their centre of both the world and civilisation. Other examples include, but are not limited to, Greenland's Inuits who thought of their place as the centre of the world and human civilisation, Mongols who thought they lived on the world's mound and Indocentrism which argued for Indian centrality in both geographical and historical terms (Tuan 1990). The question is perhaps not so much who is or who is not spatially centric but how that ontological relationship between place and being came to be depoliticised in the universalising spatial principles that came to shape the abstract place of the nation-state.

The idea of ethnocentrism started gradually to change in China (among other "countries") with the arrival of a new way of thinking about territory (as a spatial political technology). A

characteristic example of the spatial-ethnic revision of what it meant to talk of China is visible in the Qianlong Emperor's 1775 pronouncement on the unity of China.

"There exists a view of China (Zhongxia), according to which non-Han people cannot become *China*'s subject and their land cannot be integrated into the territory of *China*. This does not represent our dynasty's understanding of *China*, but is instead that of the earlier Han, Tang, Song, and Ming dynasties"(Zhao 2006: 4, original emphasis).

The transformation from an ethnically defined China to a territorial abstract unity symbolised a transformation in what "China" was and what it meant to be "Chinese". The Qing successfully managed to subordinate their ethnic origins and similarly as in the case of other contemporaneous empires (e.g. Ottomans) came to identify their ethnic origins with that of the nation-state. This became visible in their interaction with other empires, for example in the Sino-Russian Nerchinsk Treaty of 1689. The text, originally drafted by Jesuits in Latin, links the name of the Qing Empire in both the Manchu and the Chinese language with the term "China" (Chinese: *shu zhongguo*, Manchu: *dulimbai gurun*) (Zhao 2006).

The production of space into a distinct territory also became represented in maps which adhered to the same universalising principles of modernity. The spatial representation in cartographic maps are known to both mask differences in the organisation, use and production of space and to forge imagined unities that serve the basis for state legitimacy and state formation. "Cartography did not invent territory but it changed the ways of producing territory, and in that respect cartography conditioned and facilitated the formation of states, empires and a global space during the early modern era" (Strandsbjerg 2010: 15).

Maps are (what Foucault would have called) "technologies of knowledge" and more often exclude things than they include. The incorporation of geometric knowledge on measures of longitude and latitude in maps, which occurred first during the late Ming but only became politically relevant during the Qing, was employed as a technical means to territorialise China and bring about a gradual transformation from an ethnocentric state to a modern territorialised nation-state. It bears mentioning however that the idea of "centrality" was similar to the European context not abandoned. The location of Beijing in fact remained in all sequential state approved atlases (that I have seen) the prime meridian until as late as the 1930s.

Figure 3: *Kangxi huangyu quanlan tu* (Atlas of the Empire of the Kangxi Era) (1943[1721])[11]. (Library of congress (*G7820.L8*) in Li Xiaocong (2004: 12-13), see also Li Xiaocong (1996: 160-167) for locations in Europe of other versions and Walter Fuchs (1943) for useful reproductions of the original maps. Finally, see British Library for Matteo Ripa's version of 1719 (location: *Maps 37.e.28*)[12].

The accurate mapping and representation of territories and borders in the *Kangxi huangyu quanlan tu* (figure 3) served the purpose to protect the state's interests against the threats that existed in its interior (Mongolia and Tibet) and its exterior (Russia and possibly beyond),

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[11] The map combined newly gathered surveying data and existing information from the 32 provincial and regional maps that were collected by Jesuit Pierre Jartoux. Régis, Jartoux and Fridelli were sequentially responsible for sending the map to France and for disseminating the new geographical knowledge to Europe. The map was later (1735) reproduced by Duhalde in his "Description geographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise" which in turn was (1738) translated into English under the title "A Description of the Empire ofChina and Chinese-Tartary, Together with the Kingdoms of Korea, and Tibet" (Yee 1994).

The map was written in Chinese for interior places and in Manchu for exterior space. Matteo Ripa later onwards annotated the map in Italian (see BL Maps K.Top.116.15, 15a, 15b). Ripa's map was similarly, to the one produced for the Kangxi emperor, drawn to a scale of 1:1,400,000.

[12] Matteo Ripa's 1719 spectacular map, based on the original *Huangyu quanlan tu*, was presented to George I (Gray 1960) and its beautifully illustrated three rolls can now be found at the British Library (*Maps K.Top.116.15, 15a, 15b*).

while simultaneously helping to construct the myth of a unified national identity (or "civilisation"). These two objectives do not mutually exclude each other, but are instead interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The expansion and consolidation of territory was during the Qing inseparable from the more global context at that time[13]. Millward notes for example that "Qing expansion to the northwest parallels European state-building and expansionism in its concern with measurement and the "scientific" gathering of geographic and ethnographic data to undergird national and imperial control" (1999: 76). Similar conclusions can be drawn from the Qing's ethnographic records (Hostetler 2001; compare with Teng 2004) and its militarisation projects (Waley-Cohen 2006; see also the edited volume of Di Cosmo 2009) which are in the literature both employed to illustrate the nation state enterprise[14].

The gradual territorial and multi-ethnic nation-state also displayed its unity architecturally in both the *yuanming yuan* and the Qing Summer Palace. The *yuanming yuan*, which served besides its function as the favourite residence of the Qianlong emperor also as a manufacturing site for clock and glassmaking in the 18th century, represented an important spatial metaphor for Qing universal imperialism. The gardens hosted numerous reproductions of famous buildings from across the country and were additionally home to several European inspired rococo baroque and renaissance palatial buildings (*xiyang lou*). Elman describes the complex as being representative of an "eclectic architectural style that the Manchu court favored as part of their efforts to create a universal vision of their power in Asia and beyond" (2009: 74, 75). Waley-Cohen similarly described the gardens as "a kind of theme park of possession or domination" (2006: 127, fn. 6) and raises the question as to what the extent bourbon Versailles might have influenced the construction of the gardens. The gardens were, in other words, constructed to represent and symbolise the unity and widespread influence of the Qing Empire in a miniature form.

The reproduction of buildings and architectural styles was not limited to the *yuanming yuan* alone, but is also characteristic of the Qing Summer Palace (*bishu shanzhuang*) in Chengde. Here several southern influenced pagodas and numerous Tibetan Buddhist temples and

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13 The importance that the Qianlong emperor attached to more detailed knowledge is also observed by Lauren Newby who writes that the Qianlong emperor was "personally concerned by the dearth of geographical knowledge of the region and laid particular stress on the need to correct inaccuracies and standardize the transliteration of proper names" (1996: 68). The fact that special emphasis was paid to transliteration by the Qianlong is also visible in the Unified Language Gazetteer of the Western Regions (*Xiyu tongwen zhi*) which "was intended to standardize Chinese and Manchu transcriptions of Mongolian, Zunghar, Eastern Turki (Uyghur), and Tibetan names as an aid to the compilation of the Huangyu Xiyu tuzhi, and the Pingding Zhunga'er fanglue (Imperially commissioned military history of the pacification of the Zunghars)"(Millward 1999: 74, 75).

[14] See also Perdue's (2005) impressive work on this subject.

even regional landscapes were constructed[15], most of which were directly influenced by places from across the newly conquered territories, to display the legitimacy and territorial grandeur of the imperial Qing. The choice for the location of Chengde, on the northern fringes (and thus outside the Great Wall) of the Qing Empire (bordering Manchuria and Mongolia), was similarly a carefully weighted political decision and posed a radical break from earlier Chinese traditions that had placed capitals in more centrally located sites[16]. Forêt explains the decision as being an integral part of the "urban fulfilment of the "Great Enterprise" that aimed at establishing the legitimacy of Manchu power in East and Central Asia" (1995: 327; 2000: 18). It is no wonder then that the politics underlying the construction of such sites is comparable and even historically interconnected to that of the palaces of Versailles in France[17].

The deconstruction and detaching of modern China from older theoretical and historical paradigms opens the path to generalise modernity on the basis of a shifting reorientation in the representation, production and experience of place. The standardisation of territorial space and the production of abstract geographic imaginations, which came to constitute the place of the nation state, are the defining characteristics of a modernity that produces uniform spaces rather than being the geographical product of them. To consider the Chinese nation state not modern is besides missing the point, a contradiction in terms. Contemporary China is by its very construct a modern place that finds it origins in the homogenising principles of time and space.

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15 The Puning Si temple was for example modelled after the *bSam-yas* (*Samyé*) *Temple* in Tibet, the *Putuo Zongcheng Miao* was reproduced after the original *Potala Palace* in Lhasa and the architecture of the *Anyuan* (or *Ili*) *Temple* is believed to have been based on the *Guerzha Temple* in Xinjiang. The tall *Jinshan ting* (or *Shangdi ge*) Pagoda was based on the Jinshan temple in Zhenjiang and the Sheli pagoda finds its origins in the Bao'en monastery in Nanjing and the *Liuhe* pagoda in southern Hangzhou. The attention given to Chengde in historical analyses of early modern China is strangely enough still very limited. For a well written analysis of the architectural works, the origins and their relevance for the Qing imperial project, please see Philippe Forêt's *Mapping Chengde: The Qing Landscape Enterprise* (2000).

16 Forêt (2000) argues that the site served as the third capital (in addition to Beijing and Mukden) for the Manchu Qing.

17 The two courts are known to have substantially exchanged their respective cultures. The introduction of Chinoiserie architecture in Versailles dates back to the "Trianon de Porcelaine" in 1670. The building, located in the park at Versailles, was is in fact the first known piece of Chinoiserie architecture in Europe (see Thomas 2009, also for an excellent comperative study between Versailles and the *Yuanming Yuan*). The Qianlong Emperor's fascination with the European arts was, in turn, visualised by the 16 large scale battle paintings (8 meters wide and 4 meters high) of his military campaigns in Xinjiang which he commissioned to the Jesuits Sallusti, Attiret, Sichelbarth and the famous Italian court painter Giuseppe Castiglione (see Sullivan 1989, especially: 67-77; and Szrajber 2006). The paintings were later, on request by the Chinese emperor, sent to for production in France. Waley-Cohen notes that an important reason for sending the paintings to France was the Qianlong's wish "to make his own military might known in those quarters" (2006: 41).

The careful integration of territories into a constructed unified whole anticipated the arrival and gradual dissemination of a national awareness that makes the experience in China little different than the modernisation enterprise and experience in other "countries". The universalising process that brought with it the legitimacy of the nation state was global in its distribution of the logic and measurement of time and space. The space that globalisation is made out of can therefore not be different than then place which the nation state is. This means, in other words, that globalisation and the nation state are not and cannot be spatial opposites but are in fact the logical and direct result of the way we think of and have used space.

The next section will show how the continuity and expansion in the representation and production of a modern conceptualisation of space helped to forge a link between the 20th century political ideologies (of the CCP and the GMD) and the built environment and imagined unity of the nation state. The centrality of China as a place is in this project of identity formation inescapably linked to the production and ultimately the representation of especially urban space. What is necessary therefore is an understanding of how spatial (re)arrangements evolved after the coming to power of first the GMD and then the CCP. The representation and production of space came to infiltrate and inform people's urban everydayness. The social relationship to place became as a result of the increasingly organised state gradually more politicised, while their sense of belonging to the nation state was gradually naturalised. This process of "subjectification" (or perhaps rather "interpellation") was again much more geographically and conceptually global than is often assumed.

THE PRODUCTION OF THE CITY FOR THE NEW NATION STATE

The integration of modernity, i.e. reconfiguring space and time to a universal logic, into the everydayness is arguably most felt in the city. The idea of equalising modernity with the city is at least as old as Goethe's Faust and has consequentially been one of the cornerstones for the Great Modernists (Marx, Weber etc) to come to terms with modernity. The need to arrange the city on the basis of the universal logic of modernity is (dependent on whom one reads) driven by the sheer number of people that either visit or live there and/or by the capital and resources that reside there.

Rationalising the city in spatial terms through the creation and widening of roads, sewage systems, modern housing (etc) brings order to an otherwise chaotic whole. The person that is "lost" (an inherently spatial term) in an unknown city is likely to ask for "directions" (spatial) and for the duration (temporal) to get from point A to point B. This is done preferably by

someone that has more "knowledge" about the spatial structure of the city. That knowledge can however only be transferred in a common medium which is understood by both the receiver and supplier of the information. The city as such becomes an abstract text (or *meta-language*) which is ready for anyone to be read, even though not everybody might be familiar with the sheer number of places that compose the city.

The latter suggests that the phenomenological aspect of the city (the relationship between being and place) remains untouched and is thus open for subjective appropriation. The role of the architectural planner, the "human image of God the Creator" (Lefebvre 1996: 98), is therefore focused on normalising and neutralising places through their integration into a monotonous and rational form of space.

GMD

The idea of modern urban planning (or the rational organising of space) was in China first introduced during the GMD period. The city of Nanjing was imagined to become a symbol of a new China (*xin zhongguo*). Sun Yat-sen imagined the new capital to "become an exemplar for the modern China to come, combing modern technology and materials with the best of Chinese architecture and aesthetics… The new capital of China, would hearken back to the "time of her greatest past glory", instilling patriotism in the hearts of all Chinese people" (Musgrove 2000: 139). The fact that the modern production of space in Nanjing was used here to "return" to another (the thus far greatest) place in the past does not only refer to a legitimisation process undertaken by the state but also retrospectively rationalises the spatial unity of the older spatial project. This reinterpretation of a place, which was not modern before the Qing, signals the authority and abstract unity of modernity with its totalising attitude towards the representation of both geography and history. The importance of an imagined united national past in the architecture of the built environment was, in other words, not downplayed but fully exploited and integrated to further boost the legitimacy of the ruling GMD (see figures 4 to 6).

The rationale for this integration, which leads to a historical harmonisation of time and space, is the formation of the abstract unity of the nation state. The relationship between a revision of history on the one hand and the necessity of "newness" (or the breaking with history) on the other, brings forth a contradictory and potentially volatile situation. The renewal in the organisation and production of space is however also a necessary requirement if a systematic change in the relationship between being and place is to be accomplished (Lefebvre 1991).

Nanjing's reconstruction was, similarly to contemporaneous cities such as Ankara, Brasilia and New Deli, used as exemplary of the government's adaptation of a "Haussmannian" form of modernity. Lipkin (2006) and Kirby (2000) show how this spatial reorganisation of space (through the creation of broad boulevards, sewer systems, urban zoning and the reallocation of thousands of people) symbolised a vast plan for the remodelling and engineering a "new Chinese society"[18].

The leadership of the GMD in the creation of a new Chinese citizenship (based on the principle of *yidang zhiguo* or "govern the state through the party") was given a central role in this transformation. This was spatially translated in the different competing urban plans which all emphasised the spatial-political role of the GMD government in the construction of what was described by the New York Times as the "Capitol Hill of China" (Misselwitz 1929: XX11). The new administrative area was meant to provide the GMD Central Party Office' a place (see figure 7) that would help position it "as the dominant element, uniting all under its gaze" (Musgrove 2000: 139).

Figure 4: "The National Government Center" proposed by Henry K.Murphy was comprised of "three groups of buildings, one for the Guomindang's congressional offices, a government house for China's head of state, and a "Five Houses (*Yuan*) and Ministries Group" for the executive branch" (Murphy [1929] in Cody 1996: 360).

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[18] To indicate the grandness of the project Ernest P. Goodrich, an American civil engineer involved in the Nanjing project, was reported as saying that "the plans call for more than 350 miles of streets and boulevards as well as modern government and capitol buildings, a grand central railway station, municipal government structures and other improvements... The cost will run into millions of dollars" (Goodrich in The New York Times 1929: 6).
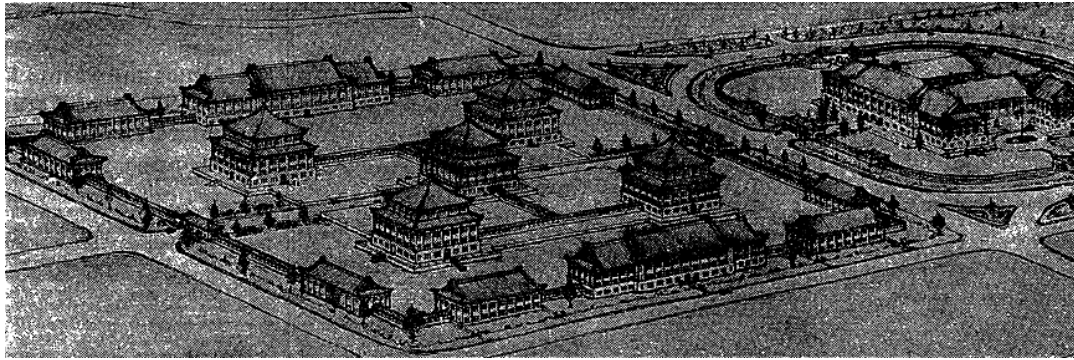
Figure 5: Close-up of "the Layout of the ten Ministry Buildings, the Ten Yuans [*sic*], and the Government House"(Murphy in Misselwitz 1929). Visible in these buildings is the importance that was devoted to the creation and incorporation of what has been labelled as a "Chinese Renaissance" style.
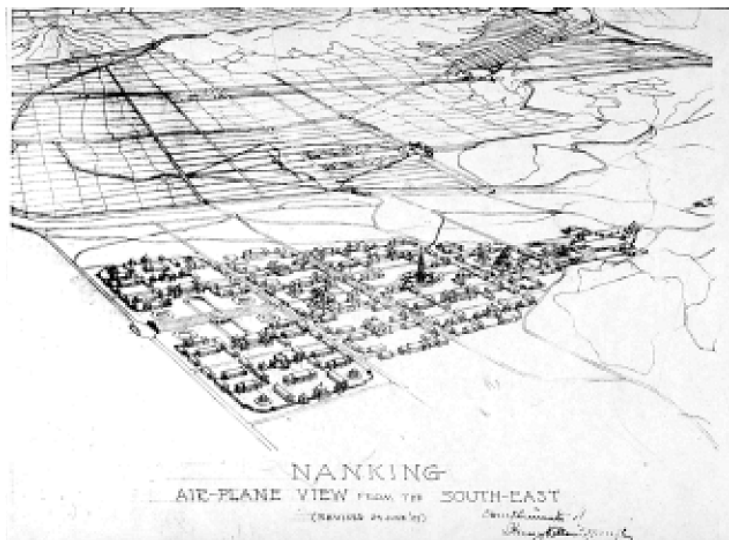

Figure 6: The plan for the administrative district was later further extended to the South (Murphy [1929] in 1996: 361).
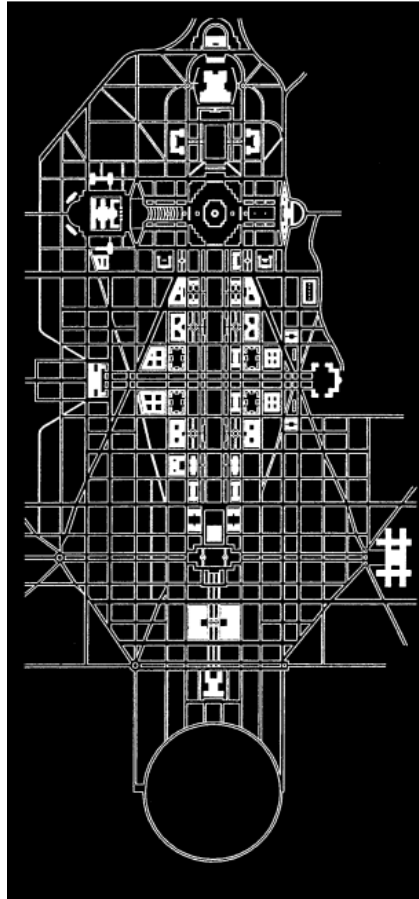
Figure 7: The first (and according to Musgrove [2000] the most favoured plan) for Nanjing's central administrative area. The Central Party Headquarters in at the top and the proposed airport at the bottom (from Rowe and Kuan 2002).

The fact that Nanjing plans was not fully implemented (mainly due to a lack of funds and to the political upheavals that took place in the 1930s) does not corrode the realities of the underlying political motives that were formed by and brought about such (re)organisations and (re)productions of space[19]. The search for factors that could help legitimise the existence of the nation state lies in fact central to all such spatial strategies. The formalisation and normalisation embedded in projects as in those described above subordinate the diversity of earlier representations into depoliticised and natural looking wholes. This endemic need to create "a homogenous environment, a totally modernised

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[19] The concurrent Greater Shanghai Plan of the 1920s (see MacPherson 1990; MacPherson 1996) was similarly left largely unfinished. Immediately after the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Shanghai municipal government pushed for a remodelled urban Master Plan that was meant to "be implemented in successive stages over a 25-year period, with a 50-year planning of the entire region as the final goal" (MacPherson 1996: 512). Lu notes that while the old Shanghai plan primarily "emphasized the Beaux-Arts concern for formal grandeur, the new plan stressed universalistic standards of functionality and efficiency" (Lu 2006a: 27; Lu 2006b: 375). The Master Plan was until the very arrival of the first detachments of the People's Liberation Army in the city in May 1949 still being adjusted by local authorities and urban planning specialists. Soon thereafter however, the city's grand plans were sacrificed to serve the purpose of creating a socialist city.

space" (Berman 1983: 68), was in fact not merely an imported product of 20th century China, but the product of a long process of nation state formation that had commenced some 300 years earlier.

CCP

The importance that was given to the production of space in the city during the first instalment of the CCP government (1949-1978) was illustrated by the Party's emphasis on the built environment. The research (see for examples Bray 2005; Lu 2006a) on work units (*danwei*) and urban communes, which literally came to dominate both the cityscape and the relationship of between being and place, is far too vast to do justice in the short remainder of this paper. The reorganisation of urban space was however of such a degree that the very idea of "the city" came to be challenged.

There has been a long debate (see Salaff 1967; Ma 1976; Meisner 1982; Ma 2002) on the question whether the CCP was in fact "anti-urban" and "pro-rural" or "pro-urban" and exploitative of the potential economic vitality that resided in the city. The relationship between the production of space and the effect it has on the being-in-place has in many of such analyses been overlooked and instead been replaced by the idea that the organic whole of the city is a given. I believe it to be more fruitful to bring space back to life and analyse how the defragmentation of the taken for granted concept of "the city" and the sequential moulding of the relationship between social relations and urban places led to the political legitimisation of the Party and the bigger place that is the nation state.

In such an analysis we would discover how the organisation in units and communes formed self-sufficient social-spatial entities (see figure 8), which perhaps might have harmed and defragmented the spatial integrity of the city, but also helped to collectively give form and content to the new ideological unity and legitimacy of the socialist state[20]. The socialist production of space did as such not abandon the geometric project which the Qing had started some 300 years earlier, but built upon the scientific knowledge and rationality of modernity to create its own urban utopia. The creation of a socialist utopia was at the very core of the relationship between being and place. The new spatial rearrangement was not only employed to combine work with dwelling but reshaped the meaning of what it meant "to be in place". The work unit", Lu and Perry note, "was once so essential to daily life in urban China that people would say one could be without a job, but not without a danwei" (1997: 3).

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[20] This argument falls largely in line with what Perry (2007) calls a "strategy of divide-and-conquer" in which urban society is fragmented and subjective consciousness is converted to serve the national interest of the socialist state (cf. Bray 1997).
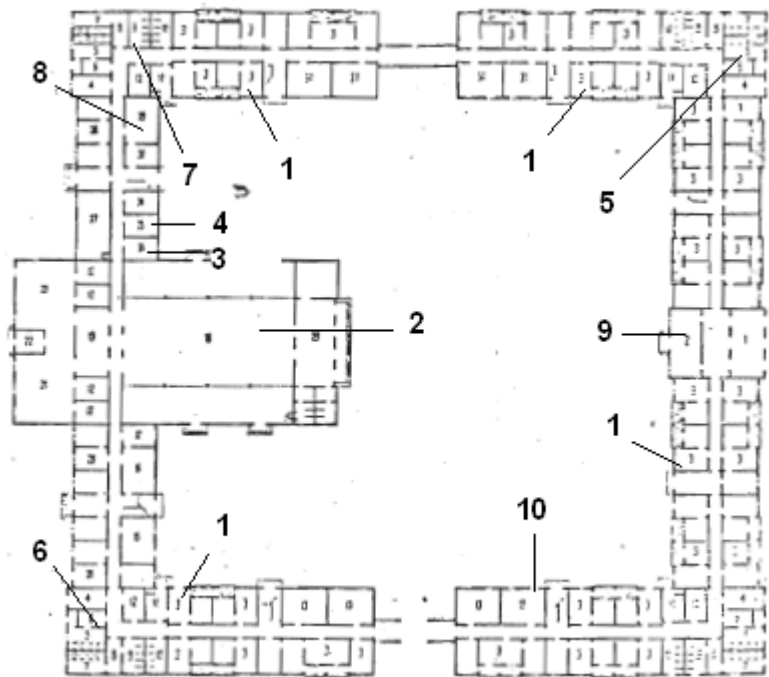
Figure 8: Hongshun Li People's Commune (in Tianjin) layout[21]. The urban commune was built in the period 1958-1962 and covered an area of 16,000 square meters (37 percent of which had a residential purpose). Legend: 1) *danyuan*, 2) communal dining hall and kitchen, 3) shop, 4) bank, 5) bathrooms (female), 6) bathrooms (male), 7) toilets, 8) laundry rooms, 9) lobby and reception, 10) day-care facilities (plan from Huang [1958] 1983, numbering added).

The urge to reorganise space in the city was also at the heart for the destruction of much of the imperial city of Beijing. The fact that the CCP chose Beijing over Shanghai, Nanjing or Chongqing as the capital of a new China is symbolic for the difficult relationship between the desire for the new (place) and the authority that resides in the (places of) the old. This led also to the difficult decision that the CCP had to undertake with regards to the built environment of the old imperial centre. The need to preserve the heart of what had become synonymous to (but initially had not been) China, i.e. Ming China[22], ran counter to the Party's new imagined representation of the China that should be.

An inevitable struggle arouse between those that wished to preserve the city (led by the "father of modern China architecture" Liang Sicheng and the urban planner Chen Zhangxin) and those that wished to destruct and rebuild the old centre of Beijing (headed by the Soviet planner M.G. Barannikov and the Chinese planners Zhao Dongri and Zhu Zhaoxue).

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[21] According to the local authorities, Liu Shaoqi visited the Hongshun Li in 1959 which inspired him to consider the famous urban communes of the early 1960s (http://www.hw01.com/316/561/20080610134150.htm [in Chinese]).

[22] The Forbidden City was founded and transformed into the empire's capital city in the Ming dynasty during the rule of Yongle Emperor.

Chairman Mao's personal involvement[23] in favouring the plan proposed by the latter group which wanted to locate the new government of the PRC inside Beijing's old imperial quarters is both symbolic for the importance of spatial and historical centrality and for the "creative destruction" that is necessary to legitimise the arrival of a new state and ideology[24].

At the heart of the organisation, production and representation of space resides the dialectic relationship between being and place. The moulding that takes place, as a result of the social relations that constitute and vitalise the abstract unity of the nation state, reconfigures the relationship between being and place. The role of the planner is not that of the neutral architect of space but of the politicised mediator that transcends and reproduces an organisation of space which legitimises and empowers the nation state. This modern logic applies as much to the city of Mao as it does to that of Deng.

BEING IN THE MARKET PLACE

The shape and function of the city has since the reforms (*gaige kaifang)* in 1978 been reinvented to serve a different political purpose. The use of space has shifted from a centrally state led apparatus with a clear focus on socialist modes of production to a more decentralised system in which decisions are increasingly made on a basis of market interests. The re-direction towards a decentralised state-led capitalism marks both a radical shift in the use of space and the shape of place, but also shows significant continuities in the role of the state and the influence it has on the production and organisation of urban space. The purpose of the previous discussed work units has for example significantly been reformed. The formerly spatially demarcated units are spatially made more accessible and increasingly cater welfare and community oriented functions instead of political and productive purposes. The Chinese cities in the aftermath have as a result of this "spatial opening-up" grown into more "organic" looking wholes.

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[23] It is somewhat unclear how much Mao was involved in the favouring of the so-called "Zhao-Zhu Plan". Wu follows Wang Jun in arguing that "Mao Zedong personally decided to locate the government in the old city" (2005: 8) and Chang-tai Hung relies on a speech given by P.V. Abramov (vice mayor of Moscow) which "revealed that Peng Zhen [Mayor of Beijing] has told Soviet Advisors that the mayor had "consulted with Chairman Mao [on the issue], and that the chairman maintained that [key] government offices had to be set up inside the city, whereas offices of lesser importance could be located in the new district"" (2010: 31).

[24] There were however also more pragmatic reasons to favour the old imperial centre as the new CCP headquarters. The so-called "Liang-Chen plan" was based on the construction of a new city, west of the imperial city, which would have required a significant amount of investment that the new state could hardly afford. The rebuilding of the old city was also necessary considering the deplorable condition of much of its houses. Finally, the idea and importance attached to the practise of conservation was a relatively unknown phenomenon at that time in China (see Wu 1999).

The 1988 legislation for land use rights and the 1989 City Planning Act (CPA)[25] helped cities in their transformation from anonymous production centres to vibrant centres of accumulation and consumption. This does not mean however, that the state has dissolved or disappeared from the practise of spatial planning, but rather that the state has shifted its focus and now serves very different priorities than the ones it had in the previous period. The political system has entered a phase of fiscal and administrative decentralisation in which local governments are granted more independence in the allocation and organisation of space within their municipalities. An important example of this spatial decentralisation is the commodification of land, which previously was considered to be a public good provided by the state for production motives, but is now marketised as one of the country's most valuable economic assets.

Ruan describes how in Shanghai the growth of high-rise buildings with more than 18 storeys has increased to 2800 with "approximately 2000 more towers about to go up" (in Smith 2008: 266). Shenjing He (2007) adds that the city now counts well over 4,000 km^2 of villas and luxury apartments, a number which is 5.5 times greater than that of 1995. Ma and Bao note that according to the Chinese Ministry of Construction "30 billion m^2 of new buildings will be built [in China] between 2005 and 2020, accounting for half of the world's new construction during this period (in Yang and Kohler 2008: 2)[26]. There is little if any disagreement over the economic importance of the city for the legitimacy of the state.

The spatial creative destruction, which now transforms China's urban landscape, is intrinsically linked to the arrival of a new ideology. The need for a "new" city, which at times fundamentally breaks with the preceding one(s) and at other moments silently copies reminiscences of its past (figure 9), marks the arrival of as much a new social-economic system as a new relationship to place. The immediate question to which China we are looking is at the basis on the way we interact with place and how this relationship has historically been constructed. The production of space and the manner in which we perceive it is neither geographically or temporally static nor deterministically socially constructed, but plays a role on its own in constructing a "spatial reality". This is perhaps nowhere as visible

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[25] These regulations allowed municipal governments to both sell and buy land use rights to private developers. The 1988 Land Administration Law allowed the private leasing of land (i.e. the legal transference of land use rights) whereas the 1989 City Planning Act placed land control under the direct authority of the municipal government. For more on this, see Gar-on Yeh and Wu, (1999) and Wu, Xu and Gar-On Yeh (2007) among others.

[26] Kohler and Yang note that total urban residential and commercial building stock has four folded between 1995-2005 and now was estimated to be around 20 billion m^2 in 2005 (Yang and Kohler 2008).

as in Shanghai, which not only endorses the reorganisation and reproduction of space but has made it its own.

Figure 9: View of the Shanghai Bund.

The development of Shanghai mirrors and actively encourages the country's rupture from old productions of space and actively promotes the new urban identity. The relocation of millions of urban residents to (often) remote suburbs, the demolition of entire traditional residential quarters and the subsequent construction of skyscraper horizons are in that understanding testimonial and constitutive to one overarching objective: the making of a new Chinese city.

The question that globalisation theorists raise is inevitable that of the singularity and authenticity of the word "Chinese" in this new city. How much has remained "local" with the incorporation (figure 10) of "foreign" or even supposedly "global" forms? A good example to illustrate this question is that of the "One City, Nine Towns" (OCNT) project in the suburban belt of Shanghai. The OCNT constructions that supposedly represent memories of historical Dutch, Spanish, English (etc) architectures bear no contextual relevance to China, or to Shanghai for that matter, and although their form might vaguely remind the European visitor of their own countries of origin, the Chinese who are not born in the context of their place have even more difficulties in identifying with or absorb these alien planes in a logically consistent manner. These places are instead reinvented, re-inscribed and fuelled with new meanings and histories.

Figure 10: The "New Netherlands Town" forms part of the Nine Town, One City project in Shanghai and is situated at Gaoqiao (in Shanghai's Pudong area)[27] (For more on the Nine Towns, see den Hartog 2010).

Is the rationale for such reproductions of space however not similar to that of the Qing a couple of centuries earlier? The pastiche of the OCNT often associated with post-modernity could easily be found in the earlier discussed *yuanming yuan* gardens and the alienation from place similarly started already with the cartographic endeavours of the Qing state. If globalisation wishes to challenge the organisation of space that is the territorial nation state it automatically needs to address the social-spatial identity which comes with its territory. Does the production of a so-called global space in post 1978 China fundamentally oppose the sovereign identity that comes with the territory of the nation state? The unitary logic underpinning the production of space is instead seemingly similar to the older production of space that has for centuries constituted the nation state. Do thousands of MacDonald restaurants, a Disneyland, millions of English speakers, instantaneous information flows and participation in multilateral treaties really challenge the fundamental territorial unity that is the nation state? The strong affinity that the state has created between its citizens and its abstract territory (place) seems to suggest otherwise.

The fact that modernity melts "all that was solid into air" (Berman 1983) should not deter us from understanding how that solidity which is China could have become so tangible. So tangible that we think we can differentiate between what is "China" or "Chinese" and what is "not China" or "not Chinese". The production and representation of space are for that reason not static or independent events in the creation of place (territories, cities etc) but active and political entities in the way we conceive, perceive and live in space. The historicising of modern space in this paper has attempted to show that the presupposition that the world is

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[27] Photo taken from http://www.smithsonianmag.com/people-places/Shanghais-European-Suburbs.html

flat and that space can be read from a homogenous surface is not only inadequate and problematic but that an understanding of what it means to "be in place" should be at the foreground for coming to terms with modernity and globalisation.

CONCLUSION AND VENTURES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In the course of this paper I have attempted to "revitalise" the political importance of space creation by analysing how we relate to place. The discussion of what it means to perceive, conceive and live space has since the onset of modernity, which I by definition understand to be the product of a universal understanding of space (i.e. globalisation), been halted. The definition and beginnings of globalisation, in other words, are argued to be the process of an intertwinement of ontology with a modern presentation of space. The measurable concepts of monotonous space and linear time have replaced the questionability and politics in and of place and have seriously weakened the ability to think critically of what time and space mean and how they constitute to place.

The identity of Chinese cities as modern places and the effect that the organisation of the urban space has on being-in-place needs urgently to be addressed. The linkage between being in the Chinese city and being in the Chinese nation state needs to be placed outside the purely anthropological or economic realm to understand what connects the nation and urban place. This should lead us back to the very question what China is.

This is not to argue that we should blindly accept the notion that nation states and their culture are "imagined communities" that are socially constructed over time. Instead we should analyse how our understanding of such a spatial reality has transformed into something so seemingly "solid". This we can only do, I think, by analysing how space has been constructed historically. This paper has provided a very modest attempt to do so by illustrating how the knowledge of a modern presentation and production of space has since the Qing been employed to organise an abstract and unquestionable unity of place.

This paper hopes to also have challenged the increasingly implicit proposition that space and place have in the global age become somehow irrelevant. The number of things global ("global village", "global city", "global time" etc) risks the danger of undermining the very spatial logic which constitutes the term. Instead of analysing notions of spatial "supraterritoriality" (Scholte 2002) or "time-space distanciation" (Giddens 1991) it is maybe more pertinent to first understand what such concepts mean, where they come from and how they function. If not, we risk the danger of not only falling in the trap of seeing the world as a picture but becoming one ourselves.

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