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### "Balancing commercial and heritage scapes: atmosphere vitality and sterility in the Longtang's in Shanghai"

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#### Abstract

Chinese cities are moving at a fast pace. New spectacular architectures and scapes are part and parcel of the modern development process in cities such as Shanghai that has seen the demolition of old neighbours and the building of a forest of towers (Olds, 1997; Friedmann, 2010); the Shanghai EXPO in 2010 also enforced these themes through the construction of a narrative of the future and a story of wealth, international cosmopolitanism and 'progress' (Jansson and Lagerkvist, 2009); However, interestingly, with an increasing understanding of the importance of 'history' and urban conservation, Shanghai's municipal government (and new developers) have drawn upon an older-imaginary of the city that draws upon a 1920s and 1930s commercial and cosmopolitan heritage (Wu, 2004; Pan, 2005; Xuefei, 2008); particularly, certain new commercial spaces and zones have drawn attention to this image, through a celebration of Shanghai's Longtang's (lanes) and the cultures that were associated with them (Pan, 2008). Built in the 1920s and 30s the Longtang's are a labyrinth of lanes and alley's that wind unpredictably through the old city of Shanghai and which conjure up ideas of traditional street life and a way of living that is now represented nostalgically and commercially. Whilst indeed, the branding of these spaces has taken place in often very commercial ways, in line with the spirit of this session, it is the argument of this paper, that alternative spaces and identities are available in these sites, that pose different narratives of development and culture: narratives that challenge what appears to be an ostensibly 'global-corporate' Chinese city. Drawing upon small case studies of Chinese tourism and new business space, this paper will examine the way that new-old narratives of Shanghai street life, business, heritage and culture can be balanced (Pan, 2008). Unpacking these issues then, this paper will address more subjective and affectual understandings of Shanghai's longtang's, including issues over atmosphere, vitality and sterility.

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