X Giornata Studio INU
"Crisi e rinascita delle città"

10° INU STUDY DAY
"Crisis and rebirth of Cities"

Special issue di Urbanistica Informazioni

a cura di/edited by
Francesco Domenico Moccia e Marichela Sepe
X Giornata di Studio INU

Crisi e rinascita delle città
Napoli, 15 dicembre 2017

10th Study Day of INU

Crisis and rebirth of cities
Naples, 15 December 2017
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Colonial nostalgia, growth coalitions and urban planning in China

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Introduction: debates on nostalgia in China

Discussions of colonial nostalgia in post-colonial settings are widespread in a range of current academic commentaries (Bissel, 2005; Pellegri, 2005; Buettner, 2006; Waters, 2006; Ballantyne and Law, 2011). Interestingly, within some of this literature, writers have drawn attention to the role of urban development in the construction of colonial nostalgia. Thus, commentators such as Bissel, (2005) and Waters (2006), have all pointed to the role of colonial nostalgia in urban development in places such as Zanzibar, Tanzania (Bissel, 2005) and Port Royal, Jamaica (Waters, 2006). In the arena of Chinese studies, (and Chinese urban studies) commentators have also noted the rise in new forms of colonial nostalgia particularly in relation to Shanghai and sometimes Hong Kong (Zhang, 2000; Pan, 2005; Wu, 2006; Ren, 2008; Huppatz, 2009; Janson and Lagerkvist, 2009; Law, 2012). However, whilst this work is excellent there is still a paucity of research on the subject of colonial nostalgia in China. Indeed, firstly rather than Shanghai, there is still a lack of research on the role of colonial nostalgia in other Chinese cities and urban spaces that have colonial histories (and heritage). Secondly, in an age where the central state has developed extremely powerful anti-colonial discourses – in the form of what is known as humiliation history – the reasons as to why this form of colonial nostalgia exists at all is itself a fascinating site of inquiry (for an outline of humiliation history, see Broudecho, 2004; Callahan, 2010; Wang, 2012 and Law, 2014).

Responding to these gaps in the literature, the writing that follows, this paper will explore the development of colonial nostalgia in China through two key sites. Firstly, the following analysis will target a series of state-led growth coalitions. Simply put growth coalitions are agglomerations of the state and non-state that come together in the production of urban boomerism and capital accumulation strategies. As commentators have pointed...
out, the power of local state led growth coalitions has increased as a result of the growing decentralisation, privatisation and marketisation of the local state in China. As Zhang and Wu (2008) have suggested growth coalitions in China refer to those entities where local governments draw upon 'controlling administrative and monopolistic resources (e.g. urban plans, land-leasing and public policies)' in the construction of 'coalitions with business interests (e.g. developers and investors)' (Zhang and Wu, 2008: 210). Thus, as Zhang and Wu contend 'in the making of city plans, city governments seek collaboration with business sectors to develop a competitive city-region' (Zhang and Wu, 2008: 210). In this regard, as we shall argue in the following writing, colonial nostalgia has been reproduced in certain spaces in China through coalitions of the state and their resources - which includes urban planning, urban conservation urban designers and architecture- and non-state agents including local developers, investors and sometimes even general members of the public.

Secondly, in this paper we also suggest that economically focused state led tourist based government policies is also another space in which colonial nostalgia can emerge. In one section of this paper, we explore a series of state led tourist policies that have indirectly allowed local entrepreneurial and commercial actors to draw upon the colonial history and heritage of their surroundings. As we shall suggest often these more commercial actors construct colonial nostalgia as a form of niche, exotic or romantic consumerism which is then sold to Chinese tourists. Importantly, as we shall suggest, within these commercial and consumer based sites the production of this colonial nostalgia is produced as a form of 'stripped consumerism', where the contentious and problematic histories of colonialism are silenced. In this regard, in both our analysis of state led growth coalitions and state led economically driven tourist based policies ethical issues emerge with regard to the way that colonial nostalgia is constructed and reproduced.

Outline

Reflecting these two arguments then, the following essay contains a further 4 sections which seek to outline our position. Sections 2 and 3 contain a discussion of the Chinese cities of Shanghai and the special administrative region to the western side of the Pearl River Delta, Macau. Here in these sections we discuss the rise of colonial nostalgia in these cities as a result of a series of state led forces that has involved the eventual historic branding of these urban spaces. In Shanghai, the state led growth coalition has drawn upon discourses of the 1920s and 1930s colonial period of the city to construct an image of the city as having a vibrant past and present with deep economic and cosmopolitan roots. In our case study of Macau in section 3, we also examine state led growth coalitions which have drawn upon the region's Portuguese and Eurasian histories to construct a new narrative of the city as a site of cosmopolitanism and openness - which in turn serves strategic economic and local identity based goals. However, we also note that the Chinese state in Macau have actually drawn upon a pre-handover nostalgia that was forged under Portuguese rule.

But, whilst section 2 and 3 deal with state led productions of colonial nostalgia (and pre-Chinese state nostalgia), in section 4, we turn to Xiamen and particularly the tourist pleasure Island Gulangyu which is laden with new forms of commercial tourist and consumer led colonial nostalgia. Here in this section and turning to the second line of investigation in our paper, we explore the way a series of government funded tourist policies has incidentally led entrepreneurs on the Island to construct a language of colonial nostalgia through the buildings they inhabit. As we demonstrate, as opposed to sites of critique, the colonial nostalgia produced within these spaces, amounts to a form of stripped consumption where the contentious histories of Gulangyu Island (and the colonial histories of Xiamen) have been negated.

The importance of urban planning (including urban planning issues) and architecture in the production of colonial nostalgia

But whilst this paper examines state led urban growth coalitions, it is worth our mentioning here, that implicitly we are also interested in the role of urban planning, urban planning issues and the interpretation of architecture in the construction of colonial nostalgia. Indeed, as we shall suggest as an agent within growth coalitions (both as an agent of the state but sometimes also as employees of developers and private firms) urban planning and architecture is absolutely critical to the materialisation of discourses of colonial nostalgia within the built environment. Thus, as we shall demonstrate between sections 2-4, typical urban planning - including regeneration strategies, urban branding strategies, tourist development policies and conservation - are often employed by the Chinese growth coalitions over and over again to concretise their colonial branding images. In section 2 we turn to Shanghai and specifically we examine the regeneration of the Shanghai bund and the 'regeneration' of the Xintiandi in the French Concession area. Then in section 3 we turn to Macau and specifically we explore the growth in new forms of state led colonial nostalgia that have been compounded in the conservation of the "Historic Centre of Macao". Moreover, throughout this paper we also look heavily at the role of architecture in the production of colonial nostalgia by both the state and developers. Indeed, from Shanghai, to Macau to Gulangyu Island, architecture (or colonial heritage architecture) plays an important role in the realisation of colonial nostalgia. However, importantly, as we shall demonstrate, especially in section 4, it is the way these architectures are interpreted that is critical to their role in the reproduction of colonial nostalgia.

1920s and 1930s Shanghai

Work on colonial nostalgia in urban China in the last few years has often centred on the coastal city of Shanghai (see for example Pan, 2005; Lu, 2002; Ren, 2008; Law, 2012). Here Lu Pan (2005) and Weiping Wu (2004: 167) have discussed the role of the local entrepreneurial state and broader commercialists in Shanghai in the production of colonial nostalgia. As Law (2012) has written, the hallmark features of this branding are a marketing of 1920s and 1930s Shanghai through imaginaries of the Republican and tropes of decadence and cosmopolitanism. Weiping Wu (2004) has pointed out, that the effect of these historical theamatics is that they have allowed the contemporary political administration of Shanghai to recast the city as having affluent and cosmopolitan roots, which run into the present. For Wu the main role of this historical branding is that it allows the Shanghai government to recast and re-brand
the city as the site of a new international metropolis (Wu, 2004: 167).

But the construction and historical thematising of Shanghai by the government has not taken place via urban branding techniques alone; indeed, the regeneration and conservation of colonial heritage itself has served an important role in the materialisation of colonial nostalgia. As Wu (1999) and Law (2012) have maintained, one of the earliest innovations in the city’s construction of colonial nostalgia was the refurbishment of the Bund (riverfront) area of Shanghai. Before 1949, the Bund housed over 100 hundred financial buildings (Wu 1999: 214), but during the Maoist era, ‘it’s cosmopolitan and capitalist heritage was supressed and the bund became a site for government institutions (Lei and Vickers, 2015: 220). Since the 1990s, the ‘Bund’s landmarks have been re-occupied by high end businesses and financial organisations’ (Lei and Vickers, 2015: 220). This becomes even more remarkable when contrasted to Shanghai’s general ‘demolition economy’ (Ren, 2014).

Places like Shanghai’s Xintiandi, an affluent shopping area within the French Concession, have been critical to the production of new gentrified spaces which reinforce new sites of romantic consumption and difference (Ren, 2008: 23). Conservation and heritage sites create exciting settings – or urban stages – for commercial shopping spaces and western brands such as Starbucks, Vidal Sassoon and outdoor cafes (see Ren, 2008). But whilst there is a plethora of writing on the Colonial Republican era nostalgia of Shanghai, researchers have often stopped short of exploring the role of state led colonial nostalgia in other cities in China. The trends discussed above are not unique to Shanghai, but have now become determinedly replicated through other Chinese urban growth coalitions. In what follows, we shall draw upon existing literature and field data collected on the Special Administrative region of Macau (which is a World Heritage site) (section 3) and the Island of Gulangyu (near Xiamen) (section 4) to explore the reproduction of colonial nostalgia.

**Macau, colonial nostalgia in the construction of a new cultural identity**

Macau was under Portuguese administration from the mid-16th century until 1999, when it came under Chinese sovereignty as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the PRC. Like many Chinese urban spaces, Macau is coping with extreme urban development pressures. However, in post-handover Macau, conservation has always been an important factor. In particular Macau’s colonial urban heritage plays a central role in the construction of new Macau identities as well as forms of place-branding. Noticeably, in the 1980s the Portuguese administration had started to harness their cultural legacy pre-handover, by establishing cultural institutes and investing significant amounts of money into their urban heritage (Chu, 2015; Lam, 2010). These forms of pre-handover investment might actually be regarded, as a sort of ‘anticipated nostalgia’ by the pre-handover Portuguese state (Clayton, 2009, p. 202). Captivatingly however, post-handover, this colonial past has been embraced rather than repressed by the newly established Chinese SAR administration and the people of Macau. In short, instead of seeing the colonial past as taboo, Macao has started to build upon its Eurasian past (Ho, 2014; Cheng, 2003). Interestingly, then, in the eyes of the new administration this colonial past is presented as one of peaceful co-existence between east and west and a site of international allure. On its website, the Cultural Affairs Bureau for example, describes Macao as a reflection of “China’s persistent openness to the influx of western cultures that has shaped a dramatic development that represents the region’s unique identity” (Cultural Affairs Bureau, 2016).

Nostalgia and exotic sentiments are strongly brought about by the Eurasian character of the urban context (Ho, 2014: 130). The reinforcement of a hybrid, exotic, international narrative of colonial Macau, has taken place in a dramatically visual way via the conservation of Chinese and Portuguese urban and architectural features. As local identity and pride were portrayed as being relatively weak in 1999, the Macau people were actively encouraged to take pride in the colonial past to stimulate new forms of identity building (Lam, 2010). Showcasing the colonial urban heritage was also instrumental in building a post-handover global identity. The “Historic Centre of Macao” was listed as World Heritage in 2005 exactly for its historical position as a crossroads of cultural and economic exchanges between China and the West (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2005). The inscription of this site of World Heritage underlines Macau’s international identity as a gateway between China and the western world, and its strategic role in world trade. Since the end of the 19th century, Macao also became famous for its gambling industry. It is often referred to as the “Las Vegas of the East” and the “Monte Carlo of the Orient” and so the gambling and the connected tourism industry are an important source of revenue (Chan et al., 2016). Though, despite the financial gains, thorny issues surrounding the commodification of heritage and casino capitalism often remain unaddressed (Chu, 2015).

The struggle between balancing culture and commerce is also reflected in local conservation projects. Historical colonial symbolic referencing however, seems to be a platform on which culture and commerce can come together ‘as they always have’. Macau can be easily defined as a ‘classic’ site of colonial nostalgia, (as discussed in the previous sections of this paper) where history has been stripped to construct an ‘exotic’ image, through commercial imaginaries, as can be seen in the case of the Banco Nacional Ultramarino and the Casinos (Caballero & Pereira, 2016) (see figure 14, below). However, the Macau population has been found.
to be more ambivalent in their regard towards nostalgia for the colonial era. Indeed, Clayton (2009) found in her years of fieldwork in Macau that locals had many utopian sentiments regarding a shared world of the past. As Clayton observed, locals felt that this shared world of the past would serve as a useful platform upon which to build a new world of mutual respect and tolerance (Clayton, 2009: 301).

Utilizing colonial nostalgia at Gulangyu Island, Xiamen

Another example of the power of colonial imaginaries can also be associated with a series of growth coalitions that have developed around the pleasure Island of Gulangyu near Xiamen. Gulangyu which was traditionally inhabited by local fishermen, increasingly became a site visited by westerners from the seventeenth century onwards – where it was known as Kulangsu or Kookangsu, eventually after a series of aggressive incursions Gulangyu became a major colonial settlement after the first Opium Wars of 1839-1842, when Xiamen (then known as Amoy), became one of the five Colonial Treaty Ports (Yu, 2005: 3; 62; Brown, 2013: 35; Li et al., 2016a; Li et al., 2016a; Li et al., 2016b). From the late nineteenth century, more than 12 countries opened consulates on the Island and by 1902, as commentators suggest the colonists of these nations collectively established an International Settlement (Yu, 2005: 2; 103-107; Li, et al., 2016a; Li et al., 2016b). As well as colonists, scholars have also noted that after 1911 thousands of overseas Chinese came back to Xiamen to invest in the city and the international settlement on Gulangyu. As Cartier has reported in the 1920s guanqiu Huaqiao [returned overseas Chinese] built over a 1,000 houses on Gulangyu, including imposing mansions in art deco style (Cartier, 2001: 137). As Cartier explains whilst the mansions on the island remain today, many of the buildings were confiscated during the Maoist era, but were returned to the descendants of the original owners in the reform period (Cartier, 2001: 137).

As commentators have suggested since the 1990s, local authorities have pursued ‘pro-tourist development policies’ on the Island (see Li, et al. 2016b: np). As Li et al. (2016a) have noted as a result of these tourist policies the industry on the island has been pulled off and certain spaces ‘especially near the docks’ have been ‘developed into tourist service centers’ (Li et al., 2016a: 31). In this regard, by all accounts – as we understand – it would appear that originally in the early reform era, rather than developing strong built heritage conservation policies the local municipal government at Xiamen were more interested in promoting the natural scenic qualities of the island (rather than the protection of the old buildings – including the colonial ones). As the China Daily have reported, to bolster the tourism industry on the Island, the local government encouraged the establishment of family inns and hotels and as a result commercial investors began building inns and many residents refurbished their houses and turned them into hotels (Li and Meidong, 2014).

If in the early days of the reform era, the local government seemed more interested in tourism and natural amenities, sources suggest that from the late 1990s the local government started to take a more concerned and active conservation approach to the buildings on the island. Indeed, as Su, (2010) has suggested on the 13th of January, 2000, the People’s Congress Standing Committee of the 11th Xiamen City, drew up a series of ‘Regulations on the Protection of Historical Buildings [in] Gulangyu, Xiamen’ which were due to be implemented in April of the same year. Then, on the 20th of March 2009 the 13th Standing Committee of Xiamen city unanimously adopted the “Gulangyu Xiamen Special Economic Zone Regulations on the Protection of Historical Buildings” (see Su, 2010). These regulations were important in that they clearly sought to define ownership and property rights surrounding the buildings. Within a few years after the production of these regulations, sources then report that the government ‘repaired and protected nearly 103 historical buildings’ (see Su, 2010).

In reality recent years, then sources suggest that the local Xiamen government is now trying to seek World Heritage Status for the Island. As a result, commentators have noted that the Xiamen government have ‘set up a team of professionals to protect Gulangyu in the long-term and draw up rules and regulations to improve the management of the island’s buildings and environment’ (quote
constructed colonial nostalgia in the marketing and management of the Island. Instead, arguably the tourism industry and commercialists on the Island have. Thus, in symbolic terms, tourism related promotion websites have often reinforced an image of the Island as the ‘Piano Island’ which is a reference to the numerous pianos which were bought to the island by British missionaries. With the establishment of the PRC in 1949, locals utilised the remaining pianos and a new culture of music and musicianship developed (particularly with the construction of a music school in the early 1980s). (Poole, 1997). Moreover, in recent years, the construction of colonial nostalgia appears to have been pursued by local commercialists, entrepreneurs and developers who have refurbished the colonial buildings that remain on the island, including the British and German consulates. Noticeably, rather than a critical approach to the colonial heritage, arguably these colonial buildings are left historically uninterpreted; thus a cursory glance over the commercially supported colonial heritage on the Island also demonstrates that as opposed to critique, much of the colonial heritage has been reconstructed as stripped commodities with exotic associations. One interesting example of this is the British ‘London Assembly Hall’ (dated at 1842) which has now become ‘The silky girl coffee hotel’ (see Fig 4. Below). In the Silly Girl coffee hotel, Chinese tourists enjoy the marvellous colonial verandas and luxurious sleeping quarters as if they were themselves reliving the experiences of the colonists one hundred or so years ago (Fig. 5).

Whilst the Silly Girl Coffee Hotel is merely a refurbished colonial building, arguably some businesses on the island have gone much further in an almost implicit celebration of the colonial history that existed there. Indeed, one extreme example of this has been provided by a wealthy local entrepreneur who now owns the former German consulate (now known as ‘Dong’s Tea and Sugar’). In this lavishly refurbished building, imaginaries and historic signifiers of German history and a vague European colonialism have been lovingly recreated throughout the ground floor of the building – which is now a shop selling expensive tea, jewellery, glassware, pearl, jade and other ornaments (Fig. 8). In the entrance corridor to the bu-

from Hu and Lu, 2014; see also China Daily, 2015b). As the China Daily has reported from 2011, the island ‘launched a 3-year environmental remediation program, including the repairing of old buildings and construction of a Gulangyu History Museum’ (China Daily, 2015a). More recently, reports suggest that the Xiamen government intends to support the transformation of 8 foreign consulates on the Island into museums (China Daily, 2015c). Thus, a tourist website known as ‘What’s on in Xiamen’ noted that the Dutch consulate is now an exhibition centre for the island’s history. The website reads then that ‘A special exhibition, ‘The Age of Uncharted Waters and Gulangyu’ is now being held in the consulate. The exhibition features over 100 pieces of cultural artwork, including maps, photographs and prints, which were made by western navigators and artists dating back to the 16th century’ (What’s on Xiamen, 2015). In 2014, then one of the authors of this paper, (Law) examined the exhibition. Whilst the exhibition did in fact contain some implicit critique of the colonial period, arguably the exhibits as this museum seemed to celebrate an economic discourse of the island and Xiamen more generally. Here on one display board (described as the ‘preface’ display board), the museum seemed to be celebrating the maritime trade routes – a discourse of the maritime Silk Road that had grown as a result of the colonial links between Xiamen, Gulangyu and the west. Here rather than historical critique this display seemed to be helping to produce an economic and cultural image of Xiamen (and Gulangyu) as a historic site of mercantile wealth and commerce with excellent trading ‘connections’ to the west.

Colonial symbolism

However, despite the nostalgic undertones of this exhibition, in general, the municipal government of Xiamen has not explicitly
Building, a visitor can find what appears to be a faux colonial office, where a colonial desk has been set up with a picture of the German Kaiser Wilhelm the 2nd (1859 to 1911) framing the background. Furthermore, on entering the main shopping area of the building, one is confronted by a series of colonial ephemera, including what appears to be pictures of the Kings and Queens of Europe during the nineteenth century and (contemporary) paintings that depict scenes of high colonial commercialism and spaces of colonial leisure, decadence and romance.

In this final picture in particular viewers are treated to an image of colonial westerners conducting business with Qing dynasty officials. Arguably such images reinforce a discourse of colonial merchant port nostalgia which is implicitly suggested in the 'the Age of uncharted waters and Kulangsu' museum.

Conclusions: constructing colonial nostalgia, through urban space and ethical issues
This paper began with a cursory survey of the literature on colonial nostalgia in post-colonial settings. Specifically it was suggested that in the literature in Chinese studies (and Chinese urban studies) a small body of literature has emerged on Chinese colonial nostalgia within Chinese cities including Shanghai and Hong Kong. However, despite the small body of research that has grown up in these areas, we argued that more investigations need to be conducted on the role of colonial nostalgia in China because it is both a growing phenomenon and a site of contentiousness simultaneously. To study the growth of colonial nostalgia in China, we targeted two key sites for further analysis. Firstly, we suggested that state led growth coalitions-agglomerations of state and non-state agents — should be understood as key sites in the construction of colonial nostalgia (we also noted that the colonial Chinese state also had a role in contemporary nostalgia in the case of Macau). Secondly, we also contend that particular forms of economic based tourist policies might also be critical sites in which new forms of colonial nostalgia are reproduced in the contemporary moment. Specifically, we suggested that new forms of commercially based tourist policies can allow independent commercial entrepreneurs (in historic colonial heritage spaces) and businesses to reconstruct colonial nostalgia. In exploring these arguments, this paper looked at 3 growth coalitions within 3 key case sites in the city of Shanghai, the special administrative region of Macau and the island of Gulangyu, near Xiamen. In section 2 we examined Shanghai specifically we examined the role of local growth coalitions in the construction 1990s and 1990s colonial imaginaries of the city. Here in particular we investigated the regeneration of the Shanghai bund and the redevelopment of the Xintiandi in the French Concession area. In section 3 we examined SAR region of Macau and we claimed that via a state led growth coalition, urban elites have successfully drawn upon nostalgia for the area’s colonial Portuguese and Eurasian past. Specifically we investigated the growth in new forms of state led colonial nostalgia that have been compounded in the conservation of the “Historic Centre of Macao”. In section 4, we turned to growth coalitions surrounding the tourist pleasure Island of Gulangyu. Specifically, we looked at the role of the local Xiamen municipal government in the increasing commercialisation of the Island. Rather than explicit colonial nostalgia, we suggested that in the reform period the government has been more concerned with the tourist status of the island – and the production of natural scenic qualities. In this regard, and taking a different position from the previous sections, we suggested that indirectly the government’s tourist policies have allowed a commercial discourse of colonial nostalgia to thrive on the Island. Thus, in exploring this discourse we examined the role of private local tourist agents, entrepreneurs and businesses (at the site) who have sought to capitalise upon the colonial history of the island.

Finally and most importantly, in examining these growth coalitions, in our data sections we often prioritised issues within urban planning – including urban branding, development, regeneration and conservation strategies and architecture as key examples of the way in which critical agents construct and reproduce discourses of colonial nostalgia.

Ethical considerations
All in all then, in all of these cases, we suggested that at each of these places, more contentious interpretations of these colonial heritages have been stripped for consumerist and urban branding narratives. Thus, whereas colonial nostalgia, history and heritage might have been interpreted in more critical
terms, in many of the cases we examined colonialism was viewed more as an economic opportunity by the local state and its associated network of specialists and private commercialists. Clearly then, these issues raise broader questions about the problems of colonial nostalgia in China. Indeed, as we suggested in the introductory section of this paper, colonial nostalgia in China is still relatively problematic given that the central state has, since the 1990s, revived a very strong anti-colonial ideological campaign known as humiliation history.

Given the longitudinal critiques of colonialism by scholars globally, arguably the local Chinese state, and associated scholars, cultural critics, town planners, urban developers and the private sector should give more attention varied interpretations of these forms of consumerism. Indeed, whilst the pursuit of economic goals is understandable as the local Chinese state struggles to maintain itself, arguably the pursuit of capital might also be balanced with broader readings and interpretations of history and heritage at these sites. Whilst it is very possible that local growth coalitions will not want to sully these exotic commercial spaces with difficult or contentious histories, arguably there is an ethical case for exploring the various historical impacts of colonialism on the sites we have examined. Indeed, in an era when the Chinese state has often been critiqued for restricting information from Chinese subjects, debatably more needs to be done by scholars, cultural critics and indeed town planners to understand the ways in which contemporary forms of Chinese capitalism, consumerism, town planning and the local state work to disconnect everyday Chinese subjects from the past.

Acknowledgements and funding sources

The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Union Seventh Framework Programme FP7/2007-2013 under grant agreement n° 295045.

- Newcastle University, andrew.law@newcastle.ac.uk; Newcastle University, loesveldpaus@ncl.ac.uk

1. The theory of state-led growth coalitions then depends upon neo-Marxist theories which have stated that in China (and many nations across the planet), the local state has become increasingly entrepreneurial with the deterrioration of ‘state-led industrialisation’ (Pufong Wu, 2009: 424; see also Zhang and Wu, 2003). Instead, as Pufong Wu (2009) has argued, the contemporary era has seen an increasing decentralisation of political and economic power to the extent that the local Chinese state now depends heavily on new kinds of urban planning, property marketing to create capital and to attract financial resources (see Wu, 2009). Here in this process growth coalitions of the state, urban specialists — including urban planners — and private developers and commercialists can often align whether consciously or unconsciously, in the construction of new imaginaries and branding visions in Chinese cities. Thus, for example, when developers, who are not actually directly working for the state, come to promote real estate areas; they might draw upon the wider urban vision of place to reinforce the ‘localness’ of their own brand.
2. Interestingly as the China Daily reports a native of the island Xie Miancong, has
warned that the pro-tourist policies and the encouraging of locals to build new commercial
businesses has not necessarily helped the physical protection of the buildings on the island.
Indeed, as the China Daily reports Xie as saying, although the ‘hotel trade is highly
profitable’, the transformation of the old houses into hotels has ‘damaged their historical and
cultural value’. As the China Daily reports rather than ‘modernising his own home, Xie
invested more than 3 million yuan to refurbish the 1932 building, and simply serves coffee
in his courtyard which is dotted with lush foliage. Customers are not allowed access to the
whole house’ (Li and Meidong, 2014).

3. As Su (2010) reports after the introduction of the protection regulations, some of the
renovated buildings were funded by the government and some were funded jointly by the
government and building owners. In other cases the Xiamen government also encouraged
investors from outside to renovate buildings on the island.

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Strutture e frammenti di città

Laura Lutzon, Michele Valentino

Rigenerazione urbana e prospettive per la città

Le prospettive future di trasformazione delle città costituiscono tematiche di grande rilevanza nel progetto della città e del territorio. La molteplicità di aspetti connessi si lega in maniera rilevante alle attuali problematiche che riguardano i sistemi insediativi poiché sono espressioni di fenomeni e meccanismi che hanno influenzato la crescita urbana negli ultimi secoli. “Luogo della frammentazione, la città contemporanea è per sua natura instabile; sede di continui cambiamenti che danno luogo ai cambiamenti di situazioni critiche e a soluzioni transitorie dei problemi. [...] L’uscita dalla modernità [...] è anche dismissione, trasformazione e riso di molte sue parti.” (Secchi, 2000: 61). Mentre in passato le attese e gli interessi erano connessi all’estensione dei centri urbani e degli insediamenti assiali e costieri, attualmente l’attenzione si sposta verso il recupero e la valorizzazione del patrimonio esistente, cioè sul fronte interno dell’ambiente edificabile (Dematteis, 1995). Al contempo “il territorio si appare teatro di eventi tra loro intraducibili, che la prossimità spaziale non vale a collegare, articolare e spegare. Il quarto abisso, il Peep, il borgo storico, l’impianto industriale e il frutteto; il cambiamento di scala e di misura; il nomadismo turistico e del pastore; l’énorme quantità di aree interstiziali, ognuna residuo di una storia diversa; la parzialità dell’edificazione, dell’infrastrutturazione, dell’articolazione; l’uso solo d’estate, solo di giorno, solo nei giorni feriali, per alcune ore; la frequentazione dei laghi da parte di popolazioni e gruppi tra loro estranei. Mai come oggi il territorio ci è apparso discontinuo” (Secchi, 1985: 19). I concetti di frammentazione e discontinuità assumono un carattere rilevante nel dibattito sulla condizione urbana contemporanea e segnano il passaggio da un paradigma di crescita urbana, sviluppatosi fino agli anni novanta del secolo scorso, verso un approccio di continua risignificazione e riorganizzazione dello spazio esistente. Da ciò ne consegue un cambio di prospettiva in quanto si deve