



# Nostalgia as Resistance: Memory, Space and the Competing Modernities in Berlin and Shanghai

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## Abstract

This paper compares the nostalgia culture of urban space in contemporary Berlin and Shanghai. In Berlin, the nostalgia for both pre-WWII Berlin space and East Berlin street culture prove attractive. In Shanghai, spaces that associate with the 1930s' Shanghai bourgeois life win high popularity among the local. Rather than understanding nostalgia in local-global tension, this article argues that the spatial nostalgia in both cities is related to the local resistance to the predominant national narrative in exhibiting competing understandings of modernity.

## Keywords

Urban reconstruction; nostalgia; modernity; Berlin; Shanghai; globalization; national-local tension

In the early 1990s, Berlin and Shanghai witnessed dramatic social changes in both national and global contexts. While in 1991 Berlin became the new capital of the reunified Germany, from 1992 Shanghai began to once again play a role as China's most powerful engine of economic development. This critical moment of history has fundamentally transformed the later development of both cities, above all in terms of urban spatial order. If the construction mania in Shanghai is seen as just one example of Asia's growing desire in modernization, Berlin becomes an "untypical" European city that seems to share the similar aspiration of "remodernizing" itself. In this sense, the current experience of Shanghai and Berlin informs many of the features of modernity in the post-Cold-War era. In this article, I compare the nostalgia discourses in terms of architectural space in Berlin and Shanghai. Both Berlin after the *Wende* (1989–1990) and Shanghai after Deng's "Southern Tour" in 1992 show great efforts in reconstructing the urban style and the spatial order that both cities once owned and later lost.

In Berlin, the memory narratives after the reunification are mainly torn between two kinds of nostalgias. On the one hand, the urban planning policy full of nostalgic sentiment for the pre-war Berlin prevailed in today's Berlin. Nostalgia for “the Golden Twenties”, which seems to mythologize the city's transient period of glory into its model image for return, tries to revive the landmark of urban modernity. On the other hand, nostalgia for the former East Berlin architectural legacies are to be traced everywhere: the controversy over the demolition of the former GDR multi-functional complex, the Palace of the Republic (*Palast der Republik*), the popularity of the GDR Museum or the Museum based on the former border Check-point Charlie and the sentiment for the GDR spaces represented in the film “Goodbye Lenin”.<sup>1</sup> In Shanghai, spaces that are associated with the 1930s' Shanghai bourgeois life win high popularity among the locals—cafes, bars, cultural relics and bookshops are favored in nostalgic style, and also houses and streets in the former foreign concessions became urban sections of high symbolic and economic value. The nostalgia for Old Shanghai, its buildings and neighborhoods, has also found a huge market among the majority of local Shanghai citizens, for whom “the surviving architectural relics of the colonial past became the privileged ‘sites of nostalgic consumption’”.<sup>2</sup> Parallel with the commercial interest in restoring pre-1949 Shanghai's buildings and sites, this initiative was also carried out by Shanghai intellectuals and elite culture.<sup>3</sup>

Connecting the past, present and future, nostalgia plays a crucial role in reading a city, in particular a cosmopolis, where the global, national and local discourses are so much interwoven with each other exactly the way nostalgia involves the identification of home and ego, national and local. Nostalgia originates from Greek and combines “nostos”, return home, and “algia”, longing together. It literally means a longing for a faraway home that no longer exists or has never existed. If we understand nostalgia as a form of homesickness, it thus involves the relation between home and self. In the meantime, there are both temporal and spatial dimensions in nostalgia, a kind of yearning for somewhere else as well as for another time. Nostalgia now becomes a collective symptom beyond the individual level. It is not merely an expression of local longing, but a result of a new understanding of time and space, which makes the division between “local” and “universal” possible. Instead of only taking nostalgia in local-global dynamics into consideration, nostalgia in both cities is related with local resistance to

<sup>1</sup> Wolfgang Becker. “Goodbye Lenin!” *X Edition*. S.I.]: X Filme; Warner Home Video; 2003. 1 videodisc (117 min.) of *X Edition*.

<sup>2</sup> Marie-Claire Bergère. “Shanghai's Urban Development: A Remake?” *Shanghai: Architecture and Urbanism for Modern China*. Eds. Rowe, Peter G. and Seng Kuan. (Munich; New York: Prestel, 2004), pp. 47.

<sup>3</sup> Bergère, *Shanghai's Urban Development*, pp. 47.

the predominant national narrative, even if by means of consumption. Nostalgia for certain spatial configuration can be seen in both cities as a way of articulating the long suppressed narrative of the city's multiple facets. In both cases, nostalgia emerges as a form of power struggle in exhibiting competing understandings of modernity.

### “Critical Reconstruction” and Berlin Nostalgia

The symbolic meaning of the new Berlin lies not only in its significance as the representation of German political modernity—it also lies essentially in Berlin's cosmopolitan urbanity, which had been diminishing, to different degrees, on both sides of the Berlin wall. A Berlin story retold after its returned status as Germany's capital city is therefore a reclaiming of the lost urban prosperity since the end of the 19th century. War damages and artificial division had made the city cease to be a metropolis of speed, diversity, openness and capitalist commercial vigor. To get rid of the provincial image of Bonn as Germany's political center, the new capital Berlin has been reshaped into a new and fashionable metropolis of renewed temporality. Urban modernity is anything but untried for Berlin. Thriving before the Second World War, Berlin at the turn of the 20th century was once one of the leading world-class cities that represented the twentieth century's image of urban modernity: “crowds, lights, noise, machines, buildings, all on a scale that dwarfed the individual”<sup>4</sup> Public transportation including steam railway, electric streetcar and trolley lines developed rapidly in Berlin since the 1870s (Large 84). Commercial space expanded rapidly together with the rise of capitalism. The hub of transportation and industrialization magnetized immigrants from the country's hinterland and eventually formed large areas of working-class slums, most notably the Berlin *Mietskaserne*.<sup>5</sup> The experience of the metropolis stimulated and formed what Georg Simmel (1903) calls the “mentality of the metropolis” and emerged as basic conceptions of most modern cities. Berlin also provided an ideal place for cultural creations. It excelled in areas of film, theater, cabaret, fine arts and architecture. The city's cosmopolitanism reached its peak time during the Weimar Era when artists and creative thinkers enjoyed a free traffic of

<sup>4</sup> Brian Ladd. *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*. (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 115.

<sup>5</sup> *Mietskaserne* refers to large, multi-storeyed residence for rental from the time of industrialization for the lower working class people. These *Mietskaserne* were built by the rich people in such a way that they had a largest number of flats on each storey to achieve maximal profits. Normally the regulations of construction were ignored in the process of building up. In Germany, *Mietskaserne* are mostly to be found in big industrial cities such as Berlin and Hamburg.

ideas across national borders. Weimar Berlin is remembered for its tolerant and liberal atmosphere that had made an astonishingly long list of important figures that profoundly changed the modern western world. There is no wonder that today's Berlin Republic overtly places the hope of reviving the metropolis' tradition before 1933. As David Clay Large quotes the claim of the director of Berlin Film Festival in an interview conducted in 1990 that "Berlin dreams the dreams of the Twenties".<sup>6</sup>

However, though cosmopolitanism is now reinvoked as a favorable merit for global cities, this feature of Berlin had left the Germans from other regions with an impression of alien restlessness and grotesque fantasies. Take the spatial culture of *Postdamer Platz* (the Potsdam Square) as example, the indispensable components of Berlin myth of the "Golden Twenties" such as the Kempinski *Haus Vaterland* with dance cafe and restaurants, the Ufa Film Palast, the European Dance Pavilion, the Meisel-Pshorr brewery, Cafe Josty and Wine House Huth were actually easily associated with their uncomfortable lack of Germanness. The despicable Americanness and Jewishness of Weimar Berlin to a large extent represented decadence and chaos. The vulgar and low (commercial) cultural taste accompanied the name of Berlin as barely positive. Berlin's reputation has seldom been positive not only within Germany but also when it is compared with other metropolis in the world. In comparison with Paris, early 20th century Berlin was not a great city of capitalistic beauty, but of modern ugliness. Lothar Müller observes that Berlin was conceived more "as a center of a technological, civilizing modernity".<sup>7</sup> Wilhelmine Berlin in the 1900s had already developed its unmatched industrial modernity in Europe. "Berlin", says Müller, "with its factories, its dense traffic, its advanced technology, its expansive dynamism, and its exemplary sewage system was regarded as the quintessence of a modern industrial metropolis".<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, Berlin's industrial modernity encountered criticism of its destruction of traditions. In an 1899 essay by Walther Rathenau Berlin was ironically declared as "The Most Beautiful City in the World". It mourned the loss of the Prussian culture in the rapid growth of the Wilhemine era. In architecture, the tradition of Karl Friedrich Schinkel was seen at stake of giving

<sup>6</sup> David Clay Large. *Berlin*. (New York: Basic Books, 2000), xxvi.

<sup>7</sup> Lothar Müller. "The Beauty of the Metropolis: Toward an Aesthetic Urbanism in Turn-of-the-Century Berlin." *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis*. Eds. Haxthausen, Charles Werner and Heidrun Suhr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp. 38.

<sup>8</sup> Lothar Müller. "The Beauty of the Metropolis: Toward an Aesthetic Urbanism in Turn-of-the-Century Berlin." *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis*. Eds. Haxthausen, Charles Werner and Heidrun Suhr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp. 38.

way to nouveau riche American style of tasteless kitsch.<sup>9</sup> “At the center of this argument, whose aesthetic standard is a classicism that anticipates modern functionalism, is the critique of the hypertrophic facades of the capital”.<sup>10</sup> According to Karl Scheffler, Berlin was full of modern ugliness. Unlike Paris, Vienna and London, it lacked the spirit that qualifies a real modern metropolis. He blew critique against the city’s provincialism due to its over-acceleration of the city form and its life pace.<sup>11</sup> The time of Berlin’s rapid industrialization was not surprisingly already a time of nostalgia for more tradition and order.

Later on, the Nazi ideology, the WWII and the post-war division and urban planning on both sides of the Wall largely eradicated this cosmopolitanism, together with Jewish culture. What has continued, however, was that both West and East Berlin during the Cold War time remained politically and culturally unique in the larger national context of the two Germanys. West Berlin was a political island besieged in the Communist zones, imbued with atmosphere that was more diverse than its eastern forbidden zones and apparently distinctive from the rest of the highly commercialized (if not Americanized) West Germany. On the other hand, the symbolic implications of Berlin in association with the nationalism of Nazi Germany was also deemed as sensitive or unwelcome in the post-war West German structure of feeling, as revealed in the controversial transfer of the capital from Bonn to Berlin after the reunification. In such circumstances, the landmarks built in the Cold-War West Berlin were those represented in highly concise and functionalistic modernism without many national characteristics: *Kulturforum* (Cultural Forum); the New National Gallery (designed by Mies van der Rohe), the Berlin Philharmonic Hall and the State Library (both designed by Hans Scharoun) formed an image of a modest but civilized and open cultural scene.

On the Eastern side, urban reconstruction had also experienced a time of fluctuation. As the capital city of the GDR (German Democratic Republic), East Berlin had witnessed the construction of its urban artifacts under strong Soviet influence: built between 1952 and 1960, *Stalinallee* (today Karl-Marx Allee) was the manifestation of the socialist boulevard *par excellence*; the WWII Memorial in the Treptow Park in the south-east Berlin, a piece of typical Stalinist

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<sup>9</sup>) One example was about “the demolition of the old cathedral, designed by Schinkel, and its replacement by Raschdorff’s colossal “cathedral in World-Exposition style” becomes, in this topical polemic against the dominance of historicism and eclecticism in the buildings of the Wilhelmine era, a symbol for the alliance of bold parvenu gestures and the thoughtless destruction of tradition.” (Müller, *The Beauty of the Metropolis*, 39).

<sup>10</sup>) Müller, *The Beauty of the Metropolis*, pp. 39.

<sup>11</sup>) Müller, *The Beauty of the Metropolis*, pp. 41.

monument work of solemn grandeur was erected in memory of the victory of the War with the help of the Soviet Union. However, western influence and later a nostalgic trend crept into East Berlin's landscape. The famous Berlin Television Tower, which was completed in 1969, based its model on its counterpart in Stuttgart. The demolished Palace of the Republic (*Palast der Republik*) surprisingly suggested a certain degree of cosmopolitanism, which was made possible, as explained later by an East German architect, Wolf Eisentraut, by the actual officially legitimated sources to foreign, largely western architectural models for their reference.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, since the 1970s, as a key word in the GDR architectural politics, "reconstruction" also stood for the demolition of the old quarters and the rebuilding in a more modern form, as well as for the renovation and restoration according to the historical form.<sup>13</sup> Most noticeable are the reconstruction of the Berlin old town quarter *Nikolaiviertel* and the historic *Gendarmenmarkt*. In the later years of the GDR, "reconstruction" began to be stably understood as a strikingly nostalgic retrospect and re-respect of the "historical character" of the Berlin urban form, which was no longer restrained by the communist narrative of urban image that had been related to, for instance, the movements of workers.<sup>14</sup> The subtle changes of the late years of the GDR regime in spatial configuration well illustrate the local crisis of urban identity that was at odds with the national ideology.

Therefore, in the reunified Germany, the new capital city was confronted with challenges of the heterogeneous architectural legacies from both sides of the Wall. The first kind of nostalgia that is at the focus of debates is to what extent Berlin can and should revive its prewar urbanity, trying to forget the ruptures in Berlin architectural history. These ruptures include the Nazi presence, the war damages and the construction and reconstruction of both Berlins during the Cold War. Probably no other urban planning policy can illustrate this nostalgic commitment as "critical reconstruction". The core idea of it is to retrieve Berlin back to its pre-war urban structure and appearance by setting up rules to restrict the height, shape and material of buildings to be constructed in the new capital. They try to preserve Berlin in its most idiosyncratic form under what the director of the Senate's Construction Bureau Hans Stimmann calls the "classical modern".<sup>15</sup> The case of the rejuvenated buildings on the *Potsdamer Platz*,

<sup>12</sup> See Michael Z. Wise. *Capital Dilemma: Germany's Search for a New Architecture of Democracy*. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 51–52 on architectural details of Palace of the Republic.

<sup>13</sup> Florian Urban. *Berlin/DDR-Neo-Historisch: Geschichte Aus Fertigteilen*. (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2007), pp. 74.

<sup>14</sup> Urban, *Berlin/DDR-Neo-Historisch*, pp. 78, 84.

<sup>15</sup> Gary Wolf. "Venture Kapital." *Newsstand Now* Jun (1998).



Figure 1. Hotel Adlon

Hotel Adlon (Fig. 1) on the central boulevard *Unter der Linden* and last but not least the reconstruction of the Berlin City Palace, for example, crystallize such endeavor. Nostalgia for “the Golden Twenties”, which seems to mythologize the city’s transient period of glory into its model image for return, tries to revive the landmark of urban modernity that turned desolate later.

Interestingly coinciding with the retrospective trend of reconstruction in the East Berlin, “critical reconstruction” was, however, not formed after the reunification but had already been initiated in the International Construction Exhibition (*Internationale Bauausstellung, or IBA*) in 1984. The IBA is essentially a competitive arena for inviting new ideas and projects internationally for German urban planning and city construction. Firstly organised in 1913 in Leipzig, the IBA during the Cold War time can be seen as opportunities to search for new definitions of postwar West Berlin architectural modernism. The model residential housing project, the *Hansaviertel*, appeared in the IBA in 1957. Nevertheless, from 1979 to 1987, “critical reconstruction” was staged in the IBA (1984) as a predominant planning concept of the West Berlin Senate, voiced out firstly by the previous director of the Senate, Hans-Christian Müller. The reunification has witnessed a resurging of the concept to get the “old good” Berlin back. The major advocates of the idea, many of them being influential decision-makers,

argue that the 19th century and prewar Berlin of great peace and virtue should be regained—or at least remade into a present-day equivalent.<sup>16</sup>

In this vein, the post-reunification theory of “critical reconstruction” actually echoes with the nostalgic desires on both sides of the Wall before it fell down. It represents a continuation of the nostalgia that already existed in both East and West Berlin in the late Cold War period. This nostalgia seems to express the discontents towards the postwar modernism, trying to liberate the repressed Berlin modernity under both Soviet and American (and in those cases, the national) influence. Continuing its resilient gesture towards Berlin’s fluctuating urban forms, the nostalgia of “critical reconstruction” in the post-1989 Berlin will fully refuse to admit the fact that Berlin has never been remaining in certain uniformity but is always “a fascinating montage of conflicting histories, scales, forms and spaces”.<sup>17</sup> “Critical reconstruction” is practiced in today’s Berlin largely as a mean to retrieve the “loss” and even to repair and undo the damaged urban texture that was caused by the political abnormalities including both WWII and the Cold War regimes.<sup>18</sup> Above all, the architectural legacies in the former East Berlin are usually seen as the embodiments of the GDR modernism that more or less served as political propaganda and therefore essentially monotonous, untraditional and backward. One of the major reconstruction carried during the 1950s by the GDR was the demolition of *Berliner Stadtschloß* (Berlin City Palace) under the order of the General Secretary of the East German Socialist Unity Party (SED in German), Walter Ulbricht. It was razed from the landscape of Berlin as an unacceptable symbol of both Prussian militarism and capitalist power. On the same spot rose what was probably the “most modern” architectural accomplishment in the GDR, *Palast der Republik*, which in the post-wall years was a most controversial landmark in Berlin. Despite long-term polemics and debates on the use of *Palast der Republik* (Palace of the Republic), it finally gave way to the still on-going reconstruction of the shell of the *Stadtschloß* with its real function as a cultural center, known as the *Humboldt Forum* featuring Germany’s interest and respect to foreign cultures (Fig. 2). The highly controversial resurrection project aroused certain unease. Goertz and Kennedy indicate that “[T]he nostalgia for an architecturally coherent and less politically burdened city, epitomized by the ongoing initiative to rebuild the *Stadtschloß*, threatens to embalm the city”.<sup>19</sup> The decision seemed to convey the idea that “crit-

<sup>16</sup> Gary Wolf. “Venture Kapital.” *Newsstand Now* Jun (1998).

<sup>17</sup> Ladd, *The Ghost of Berlin*, pp. 233.

<sup>18</sup> Hans Stimmann. “Im Konsens Zu Einer Neuen Stadtmitte. Die Bebauung Des Ehemaligen Schlossareals Muss Von Seinen Rändern Her Geplant Werden.” *The Schlossplatz in Berlin*. Ed. Swoboda, Hannes. (Berlin: Bostelmann and Siebenhaar Verlag, 2002), pp. 26–27.

<sup>19</sup> Mick Kennedy and Karein Goertz. “Tracking Berlin: Along S-Bahn Linie 5.” *Berlin: The*





Figure 2. Model of Humboldt Forum

ical reconstruction” wishes to forget the trauma of modern city. The GDR urban modernism was considered as a more vulgar and kitschy form of modernism in comparison with, the urban modernity of West Berlin.

When Berlin became the capital of a reunited Germany, the resistance of “critical reconstruction” acquired its legitimacy in reclaiming Berlinness as Germanness. It responded to the invoked national consciousness of German aesthetic traditions. Contrasted by a deliberate taboo on grand classical architecture and landmarks in Bonn, Berlin Republic embraces the conspicuous political symbolism in a smoother way. “Critical reconstruction” also points to the present and future. It can be seen as an endeavor to resist the modernization of the new capital into an urban space similar to Tokyo or Hong Kong.<sup>20</sup> The enemy

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*Symphony Continues: Orchestrating Architectural, Social, and Artistic Change in Germany's New Capital.* Eds. Costabile-Heming, Carol Anne, Rachel J. Halverson and Kristie A. Foell. (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), pp. 93–116.

<sup>20</sup> Large writes about Stimmann's attitude towards the urban planning of Berlin: “Germany's metropolis was special, Stimmann insisted, and it had to be treated as such. ‘Berlin was totally destroyed by the bombs and after the war it was totally destroyed by the planners,’ he declared. ‘Berlin is the only city in the world where the inner city is empty. We must bring this city back so that when we look in the mirror, we will know that it is our face. If we look like Hong Kong or Tokyo, nobody will come. Berlin must look like Berlin.’” See Large, Berlin, 588.

is the high-profiled international star architects who scatter their works of rootless globalization on local soil. Stimmann and his followers have set up rules to defend their city. This anxiety about the loss of the “authenticity” of Berlin is similar to the nostalgia in the immediate postwar years. During the time when Berlin was still under the sway of four major foreign occupying powers, nostalgia for the golden 1920s and for a vibrant urban Berlin before the traumatic warfare emerged as a way of reclaiming its local identity as resistance to the influence of external powers.<sup>21</sup>

### Consumption as Resistance: *Ostalgie* and the East Berlin Space

The second kind of nostalgia can be said as a remediation of the crack between the still discrepant mentalities of the two Berlins. The euphoria upon the fall of the Wall once appeared to promise above all to the East part of Germany a more humanitarian, more democratic and better-off future. Reality fell short from such optimism. Former GDR citizens began to suffer a series of psychological drops from their previous national myths. Firstly, they had to realize that the leading position of the GDR state in modern technology and industry within the former Eastern communist bloc had vanished overnight. Secondly, the incorporation into West Germany placed the cousins from the East in a subordinate economic, cultural and ideological position. High rate of unemployment, lower wages, and social anomie pervaded East Berlin soon after reunification. It outlasted the period of time that had been initially considered to reflect the normal transitional symptoms and “quickly became stubborn markers of eastern Germany’s relative position.”<sup>22</sup> Feeling their second-class position and the disillusionment of a better future, the articulation of German national identity is for East Germans not a smooth process since their inferior status stands in the way to willingly integrate into the larger German consciousness. They are in fact in one way or another denied access to exert a dominant influence on it.

In such circumstance, there emerged among East Germans a form of “oppositional memory” that tends to resume their personal history with the nation’s abandoned past.<sup>23</sup> The term “*Ostalgie*” properly describes one of the most representative characteristics of the culture of memory after reunification. Provoked by the denial of the Eastern identity, which is overshadowed by both a more grand common German unity and the takeover of Western ideology, *Ostalgie*

<sup>21</sup>) Large, Berlin, pp. 395.

<sup>22</sup>) Jonathan Bach. “The Taste Remains: Consumption, (N)Ostalgia, and the Production of East Germany.” *Public Culture* 14.3 (2002), pp. 548.

<sup>23</sup>) Bach, “The Taste Remains”, pp. 546.

“represents part of a larger, post-Wende discursive battle to represent national identity after reunification.”<sup>24</sup> As Daphne Berdahl similarly points out, *Ostalgie* “does not entail an identification with the former GDR state, but rather an identification with different forms of oppositional solidarity and collective memory.”<sup>25</sup>

It has been the rapid vanishing of East Berlin urbanism, probably more than anything else, which provokes the *Ostalgie* (combining “Ost / East” and “nostalgia” in German) among East Berliners as a way of absorbing shock. Together with the disappearance of the Wall, the dramatic renewal of East Berlin cityscape profoundly signified the disappearance and destruction of the dwellers’ immediate identification with the place and in turn with themselves. Moreover, while public spaces were under reformation, private space, in particular home space, has also been experiencing sea changes by new furniture, new neighbors, even new family members from the West. The GDR residential units “Plattenbau” somehow remains, as the film “Goodbye Lenin” shows, but they could be covered with a huge banner of Coca-Cola advertisement and satellite TV receivers are planted in many of their balconies. The private space of East Berlin was further eroded to every corner of its existence with the flooding in of everyday commodity. As the voice-over of Alex narrates, the dim-lit stores turned overnight into a flamboyant and bright shopping paradise—and his role as a customer also changes to a king.<sup>26</sup> Old East product names like “*Spreewaldgurken*”, “*Mocca Fix*” and “*Filinchen*”<sup>27</sup> are to be recognized by their former consumers, for whom the “former socialist republic becomes an imagined consumer community, bound together by the goods that the culture once both produced and used.”<sup>28</sup> The originally “counter-trend” *Ostalgie* in the film which represents a refusal to the discontinuity of memory later on becomes a trend of its own. Martin Blum argues that “the distinct ‘biographies’ of the GDR goods make them available as potential ‘sites of resistance,’ disrupting ‘the illusion of a united capitalist consumer society’.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Bach, “The Taste Remains”, pp. 546.

<sup>25</sup> Daphne Berdahl. *On the Social Life of Postsocialism: Memory, Consumption, Germany*. New Anthropologies of Europe. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 56.

<sup>26</sup> Becker, “Goodbye Lenin” (2003).

<sup>27</sup> All names of products from GDR, “Spreewaldgurken” is a specialty gherkin from Brandenburg and largely welcomed by East Berlin consumers. “Mocca Fix” is a brand of coffee powder and “Filinchen” is a kind of wafer bread exclusively produced in GDR. It was widely popular in former East Germany.

<sup>28</sup> Jennifer M. Kapczynski. “Negotiating Nostalgia: The GDR Past in *Berlin Is in Germany* and *Good Bye, Lenin!*” *The Germanic Review* 82 1 (2007), 80.

<sup>29</sup> Bach, “The Taste Remains”, pp. 546.

Public spaces, too, are incorporated into the same modernist imaginary of the resistance to the time-space ruptures. The almost disappeared traffic light signal “Ampelmännchen”, which were a 100% invention of the GDR (Fig. 3) has become a most valuable Berlin icon in tourist consumption. The East German traffic psychologist Karl Peglau accepted at that time a mission to design a new representation of green-red traffic light signal in hope of reducing the increasing street accidents. The *Ampelmännchen* (traffic light man) was officially put into use in 1961 (noticeably the same year when the Berlin Wall was erected) and was since then well received in the GDR and thus became an iconic figure of the East Berlin (and later on East Germany) street scenes. After the reunification, despite other rapid transformations of East Berlin, the highly humanistic innovation of the GDR survived among the very few GDR legacies of the everyday life that has weathered an uprooted conversion of the East towards the standards of the West. The popularity of the *Ampelmännchen* has made a major content of the GDR *Ostalgie*. Not only the figures literally returned to the streets of both East and West Berlin in 2005, moreover, Markus Heckhausen, a West German graphic designer from the city of Tübingen, seized the huge souvenir market of selling Berlin mascots to tourists who are looking for something “authentically” and “uniquely” associated to Berlin. It seems that the memory of the GDR can sometimes be genuinely benign in that the actually existing utopian culture of the GDR supplements the harsh reality of today’s Berlin under the new rules of the capitalistic jungle. Figures such as *Ampelmännchen* therefore prove to be appealing to both East and West Berlin.

The consumption of GDR products (which are produced and sold by Western companies) by former GDR citizens illustrates the way the present is tactically and emotionally tangled with the past. In Berdahl’s words, consumers of *Ostalgie*, who are not restricted to former Easterners, “may escape the dominant order without leaving it”.<sup>30</sup> The preference for *Ostprodukte* (Eastern products) does not aim at avoiding the discontinuity of life style but at highlighting it. As Jonathan Bach argues, “it is in this context that consumption as production represents a strategy for easterners to not be speechless in a discursive field of cultural production that is dominated by the West”.<sup>31</sup> By reproducing products of the GDR era and by choosing to consume them, the Easterners blow a reverse fight back at the arrogant confidence of Western products as well as at their previously idealized assumption that Western goods are necessarily more authentic and more real.<sup>32</sup> The Westerners, on the other hand, may also participate in the

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30) Bach, “The Taste Remains”, pp. 546.

31) Bach, “The Taste Remains”, pp. 554.

32) See Bach on consumption of Eastern products in “The Taste Remains”, pp. 550–551.



Figure 3. *Ampelmännchen*

consumption as a means to resist the inextricable present, which lacks the utopian color of Socialism, however wrecked and failed. The retrospective stance of *Ostalgie* is in this way firmly linked with its dual directional mode of desire that goes beyond simple mourning over the past. Consumerism and a chic fetishism of GDR commodity have been trying to reclaim the old values and identity by actively participating into it. Hereby one notices an interesting contrast between what Bach calls the “modernist nostalgia” and a tendency towards a postmodern blurring of historical and national boundaries.<sup>33</sup> In this vein, *Ostalgie* turns in some sense into a simultaneous “*Westalgie*” in that the fall of the Wall marked for the East German residents the end of two utopias: not only the GDR is no longer a stable signifier of the *Heimat* but also the now accessible *Bundesrepublik* (BDR) cannot promise a better world of wealth and freedom. Nostalgias of different kinds are, according to Julia Hell and Johannes von Moltke, projections of “a refusal to the present” and serve as site of resistance to the disappearance of the milieu of collective and private memories.<sup>34</sup> The spatial representations in the memory narratives of today’s Berlin both in cinema and everyday consumption demonstrate the dynamics among the fragmented local memory, contested national awareness and booming global capitalization.

### Shanghai as the Other: The Disdain of Haipai

When Berlin rose as a controversial modern city of on the European Continent in the early 20th Century, Shanghai, on East Asian continent, also rapidly developed its own and more complicated modernity. Both cities reached their peak time in the inter-World-War time between the 1920s and the 1930s. After its 50 years’ retreat from the world arena as the once biggest and most modern metropolis of Far East, Shanghai is revitalized by China’s opening up and speedy integration into globalization. Today the city again has the legitimacy and the capacity to show the pride of its glorious past, whose fascinating urban culture has made it so frequently be compared to the “Oriental Paris”. It was not only the decadence of the capitalistic urban life but also the European appearance of certain areas of the city that have made Shanghai an exotic site of Chinese urban scene. Therefore, nostalgia in Shanghai in today’s cultural discourse largely means the rediscovery of the city’s pre-revolutionary golden times, metaphorically and literally. Similar to “Critical Reconstruction” in Berlin, the renovation of the colonial era buildings along the Bund tries to retrieve the past glamour. The

<sup>33</sup>) See Bach, “The Taste Remains”, pp. 547.

<sup>34</sup>) Julia Hell and Johannes von Moltke. “Unification Effects: Imaginary Landscapes of the Berlin Republic.” *The Germanic Review* 80.1 (Winter 2005), pp. 87.



Figure 4. Mural in HSBC Building

nostalgia reached its peak when eight dazzling Italy-made mosaic murals in the ceilings of the formerly Hong Kong-Shanghai Bank Corporation (HSBC) Building were rediscovered in 1997 after a white stucco cover was peeled off. (Fig. 4)

The most appealing and shocking parts of Shanghai nostalgia for most critics seems to, despite the huge leap in-between, reconnect the local with the global. Nostalgia seems to be a soothing process of reclaiming the legitimacy of pre-revolutionary Shanghai, as if nothing in-between ever happened. However, even if in the early 20th Century, Shanghai modernity was a plural form: it had the most complicated political structure (national regime and semi-colony) and multiple ideologies (Communism, anarchism, petite bourgeois, labor movement, student movement, mafia and colonialism). This plurality, similar to Berlin, didn't enjoy favorable fame in the national context. Shanghai's flexible attitude towards different cultures and tolerance to novelties had been criticized rather than celebrated. One such example is the pair of two very frequently discussed concepts: *Jingpai* (京派) and *Haipai* (海派), namely the "Beijing Style" and the "Shanghai Style". Although today these two concepts are neutral or even positive designations of two representative urban cultural tropes in China, *Haipai* was not or has not been an appealing signifier. It was originally "a negative



characterization coined in the late 19th century by Chinese critics in the rival city of Beijing to pan the kind of opera and painting then being done in Shanghai.<sup>35</sup> In contrast to the now enthusiastically promoted Shanghai profile in the 1930s as the “Paris in the Orient” or “the Number one metropolis in Far East”, Shanghai style or *Haipai* was at one time almost an equivalent to a series of negative labels such as unorthodox, business/money-oriented, hypocritical, opportunistic and disloyal. The general atmosphere of the Shanghai literary circle, for example, was regarded as unserious, pleasure-prioritizing, pretentiously knowledgeable, and full of malice scandals. In Chinese modern architecture, *Haipai* was more easily associated with nationalistic discourse. The binarism of *ti* (體), the essence, substance and *yong* (用), the function, form was used as early in late Qing Dynasty as a formula of balancing Chinese and Western elements in need of modernizing Chinese architecture. A long cherished nationalistic ideal of binarism insists “Chinese learning for the essence, Western learning for utility,” *Haipai* style seems to provide a reversed position of binarism, “Western learning for essence, Chinese learning for utility”, which were usually practiced by western architects who tried to localize western architecture in a more domestically acceptable way.<sup>36</sup> The vast area of *Shikumen* (石庫門), the most ordinary folk residential units in Shanghai, fits in this case (Fig. 5). The birth of *Shikumen* architecture in China’s metropolis Shanghai tells a story of how a rapidly urbanized area tried to sustain its future. Catering for the actual need of both foreign settlers and Chinese inhabitants in the semi-colonized Shanghai towards the end of the 19th century, *Shikumen* crystallizes an innovative way of reinventing modernity in a local context. This is not out of any ideological imperative but out of the mundane wisdom of everyday life. As Shih Shu-mei observes that “(f)or the eighty percent of the Chinese population in Shanghai who were immigrants from the vast Chinese interior, and whose identities were far from unified, the pressing issue was not anti-imperialism but rather economic livelihood” (Shih 236), the production of the Shanghai discourse has actually been imprinted with an excessive traces of political exigency.

To a large extent, *Haipai* architecture suggests more than a reversed relation of the dichotomy between the West and the Chinese but rather produces a new way of dealing with the two beyond simple binarism. It manifested itself in an art of relatively peaceful co-habitation of much diversified strata of early modern Chinese society, which largely diminished under the political homogenization

<sup>35</sup> Jeffrey W. Cody. “Making History (Pay) in Shanghai: Architectural Dialogues About Space, Place, and Face.” *Shanghai: Architecture and Urbanism for Modern China*. Eds. Rowe, Peter G. and Seng Kuan. (Munich: New York: Prestel, 2004), pp. 137–138.

<sup>36</sup> In Chinese: 中為體，西為用。





Figure 5. *Shikumen* Housing Today

of social awareness after 1949. Marie-Claire Bergère argues that the importance of *Haipai* culture, in comparison with other Chinese local culture, lies in that it represents a new way of identifying with the nation.<sup>37</sup> Shanghai's cosmopolitanism keeps a subtle balance between the proximity and distance with nationalism. When *Haipai* was condemned as inauthentic, commercial, superficial and vulgar, it could also hardly be denied that Shanghai style was still deeply rooted in its Chineseness and particularly in the regional culture, without rendering its Non-Chineseness as the Other or vice versa.

### Mao's Shanghai: City under Anti-Urban Reconfiguration

The revolutionary era had witnessed Shanghai hated and criticized as the most rotten place in China, the "paradise for the adventurers" and a hell for the majority of laboring people while the biggest city in the country remained producing

<sup>37</sup> Marie-Claire Bergère. *Shanghai Shi: Zou Xiang Xian Dai Zhi Lu*. Trans. Wang, Ju and Nianguo Zhao. Di 1 ban. ed. (Shanghai, Shanghai she hui ke xue yuan chu ban she 2005), pp. 239.

95% revenue for the state wealth. The Soviet experts who came to China to impart one thing or two on socialist urban planning judged Shanghai architectures as the most “non-progressive”. We also see the fall of Shanghai as a modern city in whatever sense is accounted for the hostility of revolutionary discourse toward urbanity. While urbanity is inevitably involved with capitalist development and modernization, its advent in China, a huge agricultural country for thousands of years, has been confronting with challenges and resistance. Even since the May Fourth Movement the tradition in Chinese intellectual circle has always been insisting that it was the countryside and rural area, not the city was where the national consciousness originated from. This weak urban awareness naturally had a tremendous impact on Shanghai, the most full-fledged city in China, molding a distinctive urban identity among Shanghai residents who feel themselves very different from the rest of China. In the first half of the 20th century, the ethical, political and cultural narratives rural and urban were in a state of rivalry. The deep bias against cities like Shanghai originated from their already achieved “wealth and fame as ‘treaty ports’ in which foreign imperialists reigned supreme”.<sup>38</sup> The growth and stability of middle class in those cities had made the initial endeavor of The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which was noticeably founded in Shanghai’s former French Concession, in mobilizing urban factory workers not very successful. The “brutal repression in Shanghai and other urban centers”, according to Elizabeth J. Perry, “soon forced the Communists to abandon the proletariat in favor of the peasantry. Over the subsequent two decades, the Chinese revolution developed as a rural movement whose leaders harbored understandable ambivalence, and even animosity, toward the cities that had proven so inhospitable to their overtures”.<sup>39</sup>

In a widely known 1960s’ film *Sentinels Under Neon Lights* (1964), Nanjing Road, the most prosperous commercial street in Shanghai, was described in a tone implying its dangerous seduction and evil hotbed for bourgeois thoughts, which the encamping soldiers of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) from their rural base areas in the hinterland of China should spare no effort to discard away. “Unlike most campaigns”, as Yomi Braester observes, “this one focused on a specific city, and even on particular locales within it”.<sup>40</sup> “The Good Eighth Company on Nanjing Road” (南京路上好八连) and their holding fast to their

<sup>38</sup>) Elizabeth J. Perry. “Shanghai’s Politicized Skyline” *Shanghai: Architecture and Urbanism for Modern China*. Eds. Rowe, Peter G. and Seng Kuan. (Munich; New York: Prestel, 2004), pp. 104.

<sup>39</sup>) Perry, “Shanghai’s Politicized Skyline”, pp. 104.

<sup>40</sup>) Yomi Braester. “A Big Dying Vat: the Vilifying of Shanghai During the Good Eighth Company Campaign.” *Modern China* 31.4 (2005), pp. 432.

positions had been particularly difficult and therefore worth commendation. Their stories became the core of the political campaign in remolding the symbolic meanings of Shanghai urban spaces after 1949. The challenges of urban life style that was able to shatter the regime were so imminent that Chairman Mao Zedong had to warn “darkly that cities were “sugar-coated bullets” capable of undoing even the most committed of cadres. Shanghai in particular was chided for its bourgeois attractions, likely to prove irresistibly seductive to unwary rubes fresh from the countryside”.<sup>41</sup>

In an interesting contrast, Michelangelo Antonioni’s visual language provides with a different view to the spatial configuration of the revolutionary Shanghai. In his controversial documentary *China* (1972), “selected” spaces of Shanghai during the Cultural Revolution were allowed to be shot: street views near the Bund, Nanjing Road, the memorial site of the first national congress of the CCP, worker’s new village, Yu Garden, factory and the Huangpu River. While moving his camera along the skylines on the Bund, he presented a bizarre inconsistency between the art-deco style architecture and the puritan life style, let alone the revolutionary propaganda posters. If for Antonioni, the Bund has been purified by the ideological transformations, the scenes of people in the well-known teahouse in the Yu Garden illustrate the persistent livelihood of Shanghai’s civil life. Here the old people were chatting, smoking and reading newspaper, a kid was crying, a cat was jumping down from the shelf with teapots. “Its atmosphere is nostalgia and happiness, the memory of the past and the loyalty to the present mix in a strange way,” narrates the voiceover. The contrast between Nanjing Road and Yu Garden teahouse seems to verify that the everyday life per se can produce the space of nostalgia. It is also exactly where commercial activities, though carefully limited, were still to be tracked in the old town of Shanghai. Antonioni silently skimmed over the stores, snack shops, drug stores or even banks, as if trying to rehabilitate a little bit how the city used to be. On the other side of the story, some space from the miserable past was preserved to “recall the bitter and think of the sweet” (忆苦思甜). In the worker’s new village constructed for the poorest working class, the advanced socialist space is put on a proud display in comparison with the ramshackle straw-shed houses from the years of colonialism. “Fan gua long” (蕃瓜弄), or the Cucumber Alley is seen in the film in a ghostly austerity. In place of the chaotic sounds people’s activities made in the teahouse, the village looks empty and much less human. The camera eye moves around the shanty houses, which resounds with children’s impassioned, lusty singing in ode to the revolution and present life. The cinematic representations disclose the making

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<sup>41</sup> Perry, “Shanghai’s Politicized Skyline”, pp. 104.

of Shanghai urban space in the revolutionary years, which is characterized by a constant struggle between the resilient residue of the city's past and the nation's present.

### The Stagnant 1980s: Shanghai in the Early Reform Years

By the late 1970s Shanghai's economy had fallen down into a pitiable abyss, suffering the aftermaths from both the pre-1949 destruction during two war periods, the anti-Japanese War and the subsequent Civil War, during 1937 to 1949 and the following Communist era of planned economy. As an inevitable result of the continuing downfall of the economic situation, lack of any further infrastructural progress, Shanghai "had also become a dingy, overcrowded, and squalid place—a dreary and demoralized city by all accounts—especially in relationship to 1930s."<sup>42</sup> After the 1989 Tiananmen Incident, urban reform again slowed down and the ideological control again turned strict. China was once again standing at a critical crossroad, confronting with the question of what kind of modernity China is heading for. The aftermath was beyond a simple choice between total westernization and an undoing of the reform even if the agitation in 1989 did not shatter Socialism as the dominant ideology in China. The second round of urban reform was initiated in 1992 by Deng Xiaoping's "Southern Tours" in Shanghai and Guangdong, in which he reasserted his economic agenda and his reformist platform and determined the basic policy of Chinese development in the framework of "Socialism with Chinese characteristics". A combination of socialist political system and capitalist economic system has been generating the rapid improvement of the nation's international image based on stunning development of economy.

By reiterating the social background of China, one can underline another reason of Shanghai nostalgia that is very straightforward but has very seldom been noticed: the comparatively very stagnant pace of Shanghai's development as the Number one city in China from 1978 to 1992. Parallel to the national reforms on urban economic structure, Shanghai had undergone spells of pain in the process of overwhelming social transformations. The former reputation as the national center of textile, light industry, especially manufacture industry was abundantly marred by the reorganization of Shanghai state-owned enterprises, followed by an extensive abolishment or dismantlement of factory units. Although the the "Scheme of Urban Master Plan for Shanghai Municipality" (1986) has settled several significant guidelines whose elaboration after 1992 chiefly shaped Shang-

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<sup>42</sup> Peter G. Rowe. "Privation to Prominence: Shanghai's Recent Rapid Resurgence." *Shanghai: Architecture and Urbanism for Modern China*. Eds. Rowe, Peter G. and Seng Kuan. (Munich; New York: Prestel, 2004), pp. 54.

hai's urban planning, before the "Southern Tour" of Deng Xiaoping that re-emphasized the importance of Yangtze River Delta in propelling China's economic development, the economic growth of Shanghai was not able to be rival with Guangdong and the Pearl River Delta, the earliest policy privileged area after the practice of China's Opening-up Policy. Bergère notices that Deng's distrust in Shanghai before 1985 resulted directly from the negative impression the city left during the Cultural Revolution as Shanghai had been the headquarter of the "Gang of Four" and their adherents. Political marginalization was alleviated after Jiang Zemin was appointed by the Central Government as the mayor of Shanghai. However, Shanghai still could not enjoy the same developmental privileges as the southern provinces. Gradualism being the guideline of reform, Deng deliberately made a detour in his strategy by downplaying the position of Shanghai. As the seat of national economic lifeblood with a considerable number of state-owned enterprises, Shanghai was not listed as the first round of locations of radical change.<sup>43</sup> Both the lack of preferential policy and the highly cost-consuming state-owned enterprises checked the catch-up of Shanghai's development pace with the South before 1990s. Statistics show clearly that between 1978 and 1994, Shanghai lost its edge to Guangdong during the mid-1980s in various key fields of economic performance and dynamics. Guangdong exceeded Shanghai to a considerable degree in cargo transportation, share in China's GDP, exports, utilized foreign capital and trade.<sup>44</sup>

### Shanghai Nostalgia Revisited

The nostalgia for old hotels and former financial buildings as well as residential houses can be seen as a kind of reminiscence for the once nationally undermined urban narrative. Mass urbanization took place in Shanghai predominantly from 1900 to 1937 when a large number of banks, commercial buildings, hotels, department stores, cinemas, theaters, entertainment parks and last but not least, apartments and *Shikumen* were constructed. As a result, the de-urbanization of Shanghai after 1949 was basically a process of change of function, de-commercialization and de-privatization which includes the shut-down of banks; gradual nationalization of industries, especially commerce; confiscation of private properties above all private housing and redistribution of living spaces. As the city was integrated into a larger national set of value system of ideological uniformity, there is no wonder that former achievements of Shanghai architecture were

<sup>43</sup> Bergère, Shanghai Shi, pp. 363–366.

<sup>44</sup> Source of statics from Sung, Yun-wing. "Dragon Head of China's Economy." *Shanghai: Transformation and Modernization under China's Open Policy*. Eds. Yeung, Yue-man and Yun Wing Sung. (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1996), pp. 171–198.

reduced to deteriorating urban artifacts unworthy of care and attention. De-urbanization also destructed the living condition of the pre-existing stratum of local citizens. Overpopulation and indecent hygiene conditions have been a big social problem of, for example, Shanghai *Shikumen* housing. During the early reform years, Shanghai had lost much of its confidence and capacity in competition with more open-minded and daring Cantonese. Hence, there had been dramatic collision between the lousy living condition, congested traffic and poverty on the one hand and the sense of superiority the city's residents always had. If one asks why the nostalgic vogue began to come into form, it has probably to do with the chance to finally release the long silted up memory of this conflict. Nostalgia seeks possibility of expressing local identity in the fluctuation of the nation's development discourse.

Thus, the case of *Xintiandi* (新天地), a project that tries to revitalise *Shikumen* architecture provides not only an alternative to the actual solution of urban renewal but also a start point of further contemplation on Shanghai nostalgia (Fig. 6). The *Xintiandi* project is located in the central zone of the former French Concession, the total 30,000 square meters area of commercial space with a nostalgic appearance were turned from the vaster alleys of dilapidated *Shikumen* houses. Similar to Berlin's critical reconstruction, although it still maintains the outer form of *Shikumen* architecture, the inner spaces were demolished, emptied and exchanged by new structures and materials. Claiming itself as the living room of Shanghai where "yesterday meets tomorrow", *Xintiandi* was developed by the Hong Kong-based Shui On Group since the early 2000s. While most critics condemn the rejuvenated *Haipai* space as only a rosy fantasy that has been manipulated by the national and global hegemonies, I see the rosiness is in the first place set off by the poor condition Shanghai once had. The decline of *Shikumen* and the revival of its simulacra turn out to be more of a result of the tensions between the local and national discourses than under the total sway of global capital, which undeniably takes the chance to bloom. In Foucaultian sense of heterotopias, the nostalgic spaces for "*Haipai* architecture" can also be created as a space of Other, which is "not of illusion, but of compensation".<sup>45</sup> Therefore, *Xintiandi* and *Shikumen* nostalgia can be on the one hand motivated by the feeling of freshness brought by the revived imaginary of western modernity in the local context; on the other hand, it can also be a nostalgia for the vernacular modernity which largely relies on the city's commercial vibrancy and elastic pragmatism. The huge commercial opportunity behind the desire for urban space didn't escape the Hong Kong developer Vincent H.S. Lo as he had probably well realized that to sell *Xintiandi* is to sell "the idea of Shanghai back to its own

<sup>45</sup> Michel Foucault. "Of Other Spaces" *Diacritics* 16. Spring (1986), 27.



Figure 6. Xintiandi

residents”.<sup>46</sup>The viability of this idea is well backed up by the legitimacy of local’s repressed love of *Shikumen* as a basic form of urban dwelling community—at least *Xintiandi* gives back the ideal and comfortable form of *Shikumen* even if in an over-gentrified way. It was the anti-urban discourse in China that had destroyed *Shikumen* far prior to globalization. Here the local desire of consumption of the space speaks directly to the collective memory of urban Shanghai as a taboo. The nostalgia for the spatial modernity turns out to be a compensative drive for articulation. In this vein, the appeal of *Shikumen* nostalgia actually epitomizes the constant rivalry between different understandings of modernity in Chinese urban construction.

### Nostalgia as Actor: Nostalgia in Berlin and Shanghai in a Comparative View

The Berlin Wall seems to have fallen in both cities. While Berlin is seen as a display window of the ideological triumph upon the end of the Cold War, Shanghai’s national and global image as the showcase of today’s Chinese modernization provides a perfect footnote for the myth of a universal desire for capitalistic development. The above discussion tries to question this prevailing imagination of the real situation. In this picture, the memory of Berlin and Shanghai as the national’s various Others is skipped over. Nostalgia, on the one hand, can be the desire for remaining the same but, on the other hand, can also be a discourse that appeals to diversity or even resistance. Critical reconstruction, *Ostalgie* and the old Shanghai nostalgia can all be read as an effort to resist the rupture in the national historical narrative. To take nostalgia as restorative sentimentality or as submission to the predominant power tends to reduce history to a simplified and linear version. The understanding of those ruptures requires scrutinized reflections on the complexity of nostalgia in both cities. This complexity lies in multiple ways, for it involves a various kind of rivalries and negotiations between quests of different local memory narratives. They are results of the discontinuities between generations, spaces and ideologies, which manifest the innate tensions and contradictions of modernity.

No matter how much favor nostalgia has won in the two cities and no matter what kind of nostalgia is in question, Shanghai and Berlin haven’t returned and are not possible to return to a unified style following any kind of nostalgic will. Both cities, despite their disparate background and future prospect, show substantial ruptures in their urban textures. Firstly, from the perspective of globalization, both cities are trying to retrieve their image of being a metropolis to

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<sup>46</sup> Jeffrey W. Cody. “Making History (Pay) in Shanghai: Architectural Dialogues About Space, Place, and Face.” *Shanghai: Architecture and Urbanism for Modern China*. Eds. Rowe, Peter G. and Seng Kuan. (Munich; New York: Prestel), pp. 139.



cater for the requirement of today's global intercity competitions. In this sense, the *Potsdamer Platz* and Shanghai new urban constructions demonstrate a kind of nostalgia for the lost urbanity. Paradoxically, both cities in history were the objects of criticisms in nationalistic discourses and their relatively faster pace of modernization in comparison with the their respective hinterland. Berlin and Shanghai were centers as much as peripheries of both republics. The focus of nostalgia for their central image seems to rearticulate the legitimacy of their modernity in today's environment, while it also reflects their still peripheral status in reality (Berlin vis-à-vis former West German cities; Shanghai vis-à-vis Beijing).

As far as the renovation and preservation of local architectural relics, by restoring the old city form both cities find their way to combat the uncertainty and discontinuity left by the struggles between modernities. Both Berlin and Shanghai had experienced drastic reconstruction under the guidelines of strong ideological rationales, which has made it extremely hard to reach a general consensus of what "modern" can mean for the city. The nostalgia in both Berlin and Shanghai manifests itself as a response to the trauma of modernization under revolutionary or conservative ideologies, showing fear and doubts towards the writing of social/national history.<sup>47</sup> For Berlin, the modernities that represented Nazi and Cold War Berlin were hardly trustworthy while "critical reconstruction" turns its attention ardently to the seemingly uncontroversial prewar years. For Shanghai, the city during the colonial era and under the urban policy of revolutionary China provides an anti-example or even an anti-thesis to China's search for modernity. Although it seems that the revival of its urban modernity heads back as a major narrative of the local or even the national, urban discourse in China is still far from being mature. It is not then surprising to realize that the nostalgia for Shanghai's old architecture still verges on a pure formal level. The preservation of urban structures, e.g. *Shikumen* architecture, is confronted with constant ambivalence towards its value for modern urban planning. Old architecture is either deemed as "unmodern" or as object of museumization whereby modernity is fathomed only in a linear framework of temporality, neglecting the modern meaning in terms of its "now-time". If Schinkel's turn to Neo-Gothic architecture posed a challenge to the conventional French style Classism and became a forerunner of what is later considered as "modernist" in the beginning of the 20th Century in Germany, *Shikumen* architecture is all the more the product of modern urban development and deserves more attention of current urban planning practice.

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<sup>47</sup> Wang, Min'an. *Xian Dai Xing* (现代性). (Guilin: Guangxi shi fan da xue chu ban she, 2005), 11.

It would be highly arbitrary to reject any commercial effort of retrieving certain architectural styles even though it is utilized ultimately for producing profits. It may be more revealing to understand why this resonance could be caused than just to condemn the lack of authenticity in the course of commodification. Lutz Koepnick stands against the common “Disneyfication” metaphor used to criticize urban spatial changes in Berlin that it “might gloss over the fact that one and the same object can mean very different things to different people and publics. Ignoring the productivity of individual appropriation, that is to say, the way in which vernacular uses of architectural sites might produce highly diverse, differentiated, and local memories and meanings? Any assertive jargon of authenticity is simply not sufficient for challenging the ways in which architectural projects might push the buttons of history and thereby reduce, rather than enrich the space of lived experience”.<sup>48</sup> Consumption culture may serve as a way of disenchanting history to overcome the wounds left by the repression of both the trauma itself and the right to tell it. In both cases, spatial consumption is related to a kind of counter-memory as some articulation of resistance, though not necessarily conscious or politically ambitious. For Shanghai, the trauma of the past repression of its urbanity seems to be compensated by the newly booming narrative of the city’s revived consumerism. Yet the actual situation is much more complicated. Firstly, material compensation is ghettoized within certain class hierarchy despite the fact that its symbolic meaning is shared by anyone who endeavors to heal the trauma. Secondly, the counter-memory of cosmopolitan Shanghai is not only the revolutionary memory but also a still repressed articulation of the cleavage between today’s and past’s memories of urbanity, which is still left opaque due to China’s current ideological paradox. While the importance of consumption, market, financial capital in the discourse of globalization are in no way trivial, there is still necessity to take a perspective beyond the universal understanding of modernity’s anxiety. Janelle Wilson contends “that nostalgia can be resistant to outside manipulation, for nostalgia has to strike a chord somewhere. There is interplay between what is available culturally and the individual’s own biography, memory, and emotions”.<sup>49</sup> The attention to the diversity within cultural and domestic discourses prompts to understand memory and its related narratives as the active shaper rather than merely a representation of cultural phenomena. Both Berlin and Shanghai express their articulation of a vernacular modernity, speaking against a flattened cosmopolitanism and unfolding a palimpsest of memory and spatial layers.

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<sup>48</sup>) Lutz Koepnick. “Forget Berlin.” *The German Quarterly* 74.4 (Autumn 2001), pp. 349–350.

<sup>49</sup>) Janelle L. Wilson. *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005, pp. 30.