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Urban Nomads. Building Shanghai: Migrant Workers and the Construction Process

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1 ABSTRACT

This paper takes a close look at the interrelated phenomena of international business migrants and rural migrant workers in Shanghai, China. Through separate case studies of each group's role in the construction process in this rapidly developing world city, we observe them in parallel and shed light on the spatial implications of both groups' migrant status. In doing so, we determine that both groups live in "cocoon worlds", albeit in different ways. We recognize that both groups live in a state of permanent temporariness in Shanghai, and, drawing on work by Lefebvre (1974) and others, we assert their temporary "right to the city" and thus call them "Urban Nomads".

Our uncovering of the stark inequalities and harshly inadequate living and working conditions affecting rural migrant workers in the construction industry in Shanghai leads to our development of a concept of "Fair Building", a socially conscious architecture that calls for accountability in ensuring that rural migrant workers' needs are taken into account so that their living and working circumstances can improve. We address several central arguments for a socially just and sustainable form of urbanization by offering possible strategies for future construction. We propose scenarios wherein urban planners, designers, and architects could include fair building processes in their concepts and builders, contractors, and construction managers could support the fair realization of projects. The arguments for Fair Building ultimately form the framework for our concluding section – the project Lüxing Laoshi, a mobile vocational school for migrant construction workers. This educational program works toward a solution by addressing all participants in construction to support a building process that goes beyond the traditional audience and contributes to a socially conscious architecture.

2 INTERACTING WITH URBAN CHINA – AN INTRODUCTION

"Looking through the window of the little kiosk, the xiaomaibu, one is confronted with a framed view of a typical scene of Shanghai street life: people passing by on bicycles with huge loads on their bike trailers, school children in their uniforms stopping to buy snacks, motor bikes honking. The street is particularly vibrant and busy in the morning. People rush by on their way to work while eating their breakfast, while elderly men and women sit all day at the lane's entrance, children play with toys, near the gate guard and the residential committee's leaders.

This scene is displayed as a movie inside of the original kiosk where it was shot – now located now inside the ddmwarehouse gallery at the Red Town, Shanghai Sculpture Space. For the exhibition "Double Act" 2010 the young Chinese artist Xu Zhifeng aka Shaw worked together with the German artist Petra Johnson to record this spontaneous and authentic Shanghai street culture that is slowly being erased through rapid urbanization. Localized kiosks in Cologne, Liverpool, and Shanghai have been connected with video feeds over the internet, so local residents can communicate across great distances.

The intention is to transform the kiosk from a provider of products for daily use for those in its immediate surroundings into a cultural space connected to the world. The art project gives a small glimpse of recent urban transformations and their environmental effects, as well as China's shift towards the West. The removal of the kiosk also stands as an example of the reckless urban development taking place in China that often doesn't consider local communities. Now this xiaomaibu has disappeared from the streets of Shanghai and has been replaced by one of the shiny new large-scale apartment compounds" (Clarissa & Ulrike's Research Notes, November 2010).

The example of the xiaomaibu (小卖部 , the little kiosk) shows the importance of mapping the social transformation of Shanghai. Here we are employing critical urban studies as a way of reading between the lines of urban space and adding new perspectives to it. To understand the "dichotomous organization of space and society" and how society organizes itself, contextualization is needed that includes local specificities as well as globalized patterns (Madanipour, 2003, p.102).

The development of megacities is a global phenomenon that is particularly visible in contemporary China (and especially Shanghai). In no other country is the process of urbanization occurring at such a large scale and with such speed. In the familiar debate about the quality of buildings that are erected at such speed in China, it is often forgotten that construction is more than the materialized end result. Following arguments from critical urban studies, space is not just a (material) object, nor is it a pure idea; it is also a societal process of production (Lefebvre, 2009 [1974]). It is crucial to understand production of space as a social phenomenon. Thus the main focus of our analysis lies in the relationships between the production of the built environment and the people who are involved in the construction process.

2.1 Construction – a Process

Construction processes are highly depended on capitalism and urbanization processes and are also influenced by the changing balance of social forces, power relations, socio-spatial inequalities, and political-institutional arrangements (Brenner, Marcuse, Mayer, 2009). In the context of this paper, when dealing with marginalization, exclusion, and injustice during the construction process we refer to the need for a profound engagement in the planning phase to achieve greater social and environmental equity by critically examining how space is produced in China. Therefore when considering processes in construction it is important to understand the overall linkages between the involved, their role, their position in the process, and their dependencies.

According to project management principles a stakeholder is a person, group or organization, who has a direct or indirect stake in a process. They can affect or be affected by the process action, objectives, and policies (Wiegand, 2008). Successful project realization implies that particular attention needs to be paid to an efficient project organization structure and to the involvement of qualified experts. Thus a building process can be broken down into a concrete timeline beginning with the project idea and concluding with the actual use of the building. Based on internationally approved models such as HOAI[1] a construction process can be divided in project phases and scopes of action for various disciplines and areas of expertise that are required to deliver the contractually agreed-upon end results.

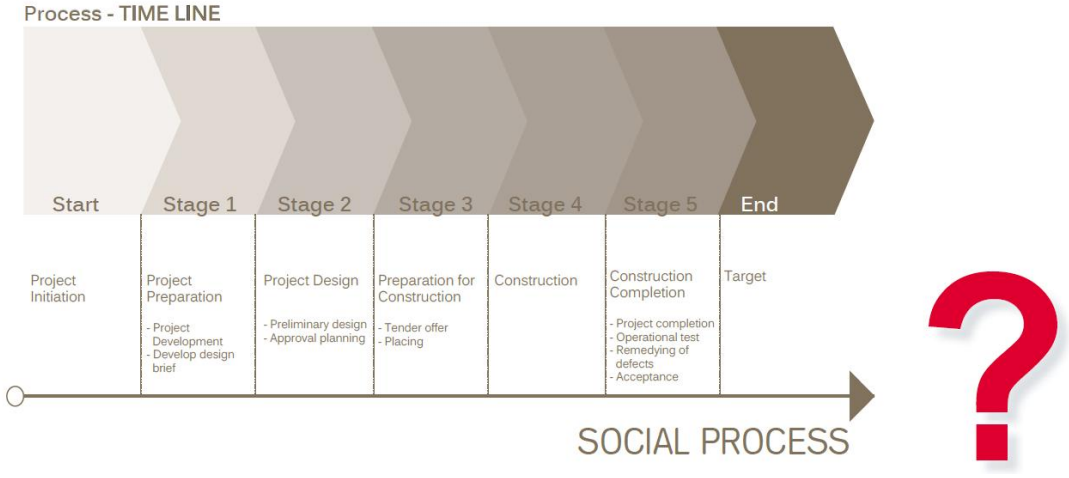

Fig. 1: Stages of the construction process according to the HOAI

While project management studies have analyzed in detail the organization of construction processes, they have not yet considered sufficiently the social processes imbedded therein, nor have they considered that some people involved change their residence according to the building project they are currently working on. The discipline of project management describes the production of material space as a process driven by the three key variables of time, cost, and quality, and has defined the positions of participants involved in the process. The focus is usually on a smooth progression of work on the site and on important interfaces between different disciplines.

However, on the construction site more than just material space is produced. The process of construction needs to be linked to the much larger process of the production of social space, including perceived,

[1] HOAI (deutsche Honorarordnung für Architekten und Ingenieure, German Fee Structure for Architects and Engineers)

conceived, and lived space as defined by Lefebvre. In China, construction workers actually live on site, which makes the building site a 'lived space', adding a whole new layer to the traditional operations at a site.

2.2 Urban Nomads – a Different Concept of Mobility

This paper is an examination of a very specific group of people: individuals who are involved in various construction processes over time. The ongoing building boom in China has caused them to following their work without settling permanently due to the temporary nature of building projects. Among the people involved in the construction process in China, two groups must be emphasized: internal/rural working migrants and international/global working migrants.

Despite the many obvious differences between rural and global migrants, upon closer examination there are a surprising number of similarities that characterize these two social groups. They are part of the so-called immigration society at the same time as being part of the emigration society. Migrating individuals have effects on the society of origin and simultaneously on the receiving society. One of these measurable effects is the transfer of money by foreign workers to the home country – the remittances.

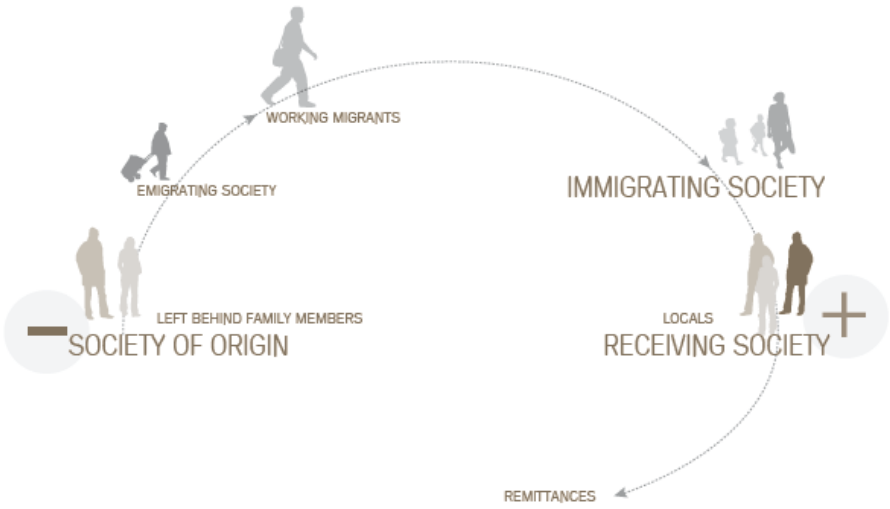

Fig. 2: Societies influenced by migration

Within the vast field of migration we are particularly interested in working migration within the construction industry. Explicitly, this means that we are focusing on peasant migrants who come to the city to work on construction sites as construction workers on the one hand, and on the other hand we are observing Western business migrants who come to Shanghai to work in the construction business mainly as planners, designers, managers, and builders. Both groups are involved in the construction process, but at quite different stages of the process – whereas the construction workers are executers, responsible for manually erecting the buildings, the global migrants are in most cases active in preparation and control.

This juxtaposition is of course a simplification of the much more complex realm of urban production but what makes this observation so relevant in the discourse on migration – they are permanently temporary urban citizens with unique explicit and implicit spatial needs. They repeatedly change their habitat according to their work as they move from place to place. And in this continuous life phase of moving, rural and global migrants constantly seek to connect to emerging opportunities and change their circumstances accordingly. While most migration studies focus on social circumstances, our observations emphasize the social and spatial nature of migration.

By trying to highlight this potential we will call them URBAN NOMADS. Urban, because the phenomenon is particular to the urban environment and nomads, to make a clear distinction between people who have made one or many major moves which are complete and those who are in recurrent temporary living situations caused by their work, for example by the unsteady nature of construction projects. While migration is usually a topic discussed by sociologists, anthropologists, politicians, and other social scientists, the discussions on nomadism are in many cases related to the spatial aspects involved in such mobile lives.

Explicitly, we want to highlight and further observe how urban nomads interact with space, as well as how social issues are implicated in this interaction.

3 SHANGHAI – HEAD OF THE "CONCRETE DRAGON"

The title refers to the call by Deng Xiaoping in 1982 to make Shanghai a role model for Chinese development, merged with the book "The Concrete Dragon" by Campanella (2008), which describes the rapid urbanization of China. The scale of China's economic transition and social transformation is evident in its economic growth rates, which average nearly 10 percent per annum over the last 30 years (HDR China, 2008). Rapid urbanization can be seen as one of the key characteristics of contemporary China. This urbanization has fundamentally altered the image of today's Shanghai with its consumer-driven attitude (Davis, 2000). Hence, the changes in urban space are manifested not only in a "flood of new construction", but also in the change of urban culture and the lifestyle of residents, including their attitude towards life, consumption behavior, and political outlook (Schein, 2006).

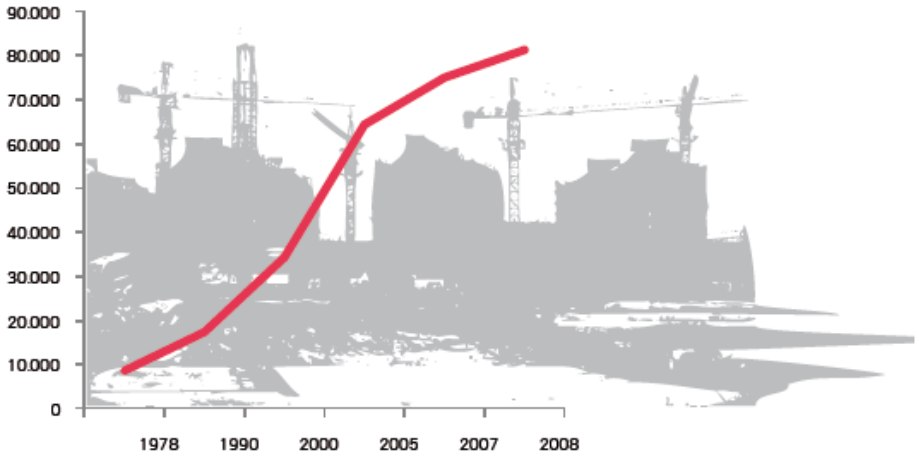

Fig. 3: m² total floor area Shanghai by year - including various functions: staff dwellings, stores, offices, plants, schools, villas, warehouses. Source: Shanghai Statistical Yearbook 2009

According to the results of the 2010 census (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011) Shanghai's population has reached over 23 million with 14 million registered and nine million floating inhabitants without a proper registration. As one of the megacities of the twenty-first-century Shanghai plays back and forth between what it means to be modern and what it means to be Chinese (Keith, 2010). As a result of the continuously growing population new buildings are rising everywhere and are usually in the form of high-rise buildings due to limited land supply in the inner-city. At the moment Shanghai has 988 skyscrapers, with another 158 planned or under construction (Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Center, 2010). This number changes constantly, as do the people involved in the process of construction by changing their place of residence.

Fig. 4: Construction Site near Shanghai

3.1 Construction Sites as Research Field

When looking in greater detail at the field of our research – construction sites in and around Shanghai – some special features become apparent. Construction sites are situated in the setting of existing urban development; they dominate the changing urban landscape and at the same time are themselves rapidly

transforming these spaces. Further, similar to the observed groups who are in a permanent state of temporariness, construction sites as a research field are also constantly changing. Thus, like transitory people, the place itself is impermanent.

4 CASE STUDIES

Within the framework of labor migration in the research field of Shanghai, we have taken a dialectic-discursive approach: on the one hand we examine local internal working migration, and on the other hand we look at the phenomenon of global migration within the Chinese construction industry. The results are not directly compared, but rather give an understanding of their circumstances.

4.1 Global Urban Nomads

The word migrant is nearly always used in reference to the working class and is therefore associated with a subaltern status. But there is another flow of migrants who are typically neither victimized nor spoken of as migrants. Their key driver for migration is also work, but the circumstances are completely different. They are international migrants, better known as expats, who move around the world from one working place to another. Expat is short for expatriate, and the word expatriate comes from Latin and means being outside the native country. The word is used to create a distinction along socio-economic lines between the aforementioned group and manual labourers who also move from one country to another. The usage varies depending on context and individual preferences and prejudices.

Expatriates have the ability to remain mobile, to make the most of their opportunities, and to follow the flows of global commerce. They are flexible executives– or "flexecutives" (Pico Iyer, 2001 in Herbstreuth, 2005). Due to their high level of education and professional skills they have both economic and social capital (Beynon, 2008).They quickly adapt to new urban environments; but do the new urban environments respond to their needs?

4.1.1 Research Approach

As European researchers we first asked ourselves how we could best approach this provocative topic of working migration within the construction industry in a different cultural setting like China. On the one hand we have the advantage of discovering China and its construction industry through the eyes of outsiders - as two architects. That gives us the chance to recognize difficulties that those involved do not realize or see anymore because they are surrounded by them every day. On the other hand we were part of the observed group as expatriates. Among other things this allowed us to gain greater insight into the challenging situation of being a "global nomad" living in a foreign culture. In ethnography these methods can be described as a participatory micro-approach, which is based on the personal experiences of action researchers. "Action researchers, however, are insiders' researchers. They see themselves as part of the situation" (Tornaghi, 2010, p.35).

4.1.2 Social Networks

A network of internationally connected people living in Shanghai has organized an infrastructure tailored to suit arriving foreigners; thus, when expats come to Shanghai they are greeted with numerous offers upon arrival including survival packages and support services. These support services on arrival are manifold but also have their cost; the more extensive the offer, the more expensive it is. In a similar manner, the Chinese media have adapted to the needs of foreigners, and expats have accordingly been recognized as consumers in the media sector. Nevertheless, expats usually rely on information from familiar media sources from their home country. Expats have been recognized as a target group with strong purchasing power, and their new demands have strongly influenced supply.

4.1.3 Spatial Conditions

The reasons why foreigners have been recognized as a consumer group in Shanghai are largely tied to historic events. Regulated by law, they have been concentrated in communities within Special Economic Zones. With demand being closely linked to capital, they have also influenced the supply of space in the city, which has led to a transformation of the residential landscape. The foreign housing market is characterized by an apartment design imported from the West and adapted to the new requirements of living in Shanghai, but as a result this cocooned living has led to further segregation between local residents and the expatriate

communities. This can be seen in the city wherever foreigners have been defined as a consumer group, influencing commercial retail spaces and other commercialized open spaces.

Fig. 5: Scale model of Rainbow city compound

4.1.4 Working Challenges

Also historically determined was the need for modernization in China's cities after Mao had prevented city development for three decades. The current building boom in China's cities that has attracted such great numbers of foreign architects has resulted in an extremely rapid pace of development. The example of the Dutch Co-Working space shows how quickly the market has adapted to the new needs of foreign temporary residents; this example can also be seen as a spatial reaction to the latest type of nomadic lifestyle. In spite of this spatial development, Western architects are often not up to the challenges they face, due to unfamiliar aspects of the foreign culture and a completely new scale and context of architectural production. We have observed that, in the course of adapting to the new working environment, architects often remain silent or uninterested when dealing with situations where working and living conditions of other participants in the construction process clearly do not meet international standards of safety and decency.

4.2 Rural Urban Nomads

In China the term dagong is used to describe the phenomenon of labour migration quite accurately – literally "being employed" – and stands especially for rural people seeking work elsewhere and for people working in temporary or casual jobs. Rural migrant workers are a special group resulting from China's economic transition and are called nongmingong (农民工) – peasants who have become migrant workers.

Migration in China, with all its possibilities and obstacles, is inevitably connected to the national household registration system – the hukou (户口) system. This system determines the movement of individuals by dividing China's population into rural and urban citizens and thereby creating a two-class system.

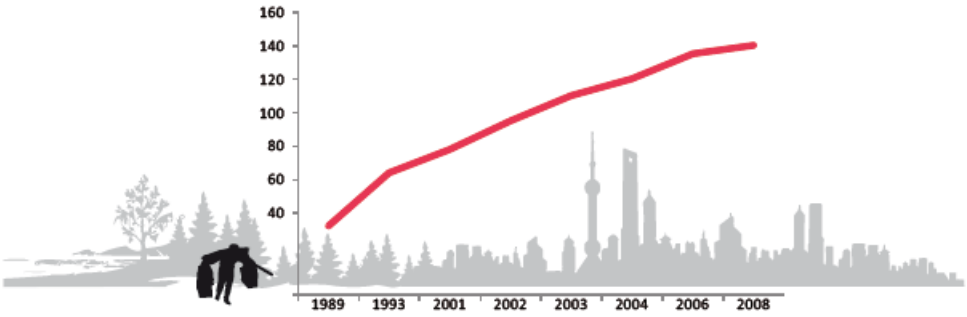

Fig. 6: The number of rural migrant workers in various years; Source: Chinese National Bureau of Statistics, 2009

In order to understand the various causes that led to rural working migrants' living and working conditions, it is helpful to take a closer look at their present situation.

4.2.1 Research Approach

The use of different approaches was essential in order for us to come to a better understanding of the group under investigation – rural urban nomads. The following description is based largely on interviews, debates,

and construction site visits that were part of our empirical research in fall 2010. The research took place at several construction sites in and around Shanghai.

While we were part of the research group in the case study of global urban nomads, our research on rural urban nomads was conducted from the "outside". We pursued an approach that combines bottom-up research methods and personal narratives as a powerful means to link migrants to qualitative survey field data and the literature. We have used pseudonyms to protect the privacy of interview participants, but our intent is to try to give voice to marginalized individuals in society.

4.2.2 Working Conditions

The situation faced by rural migrant workers arriving in Shanghai stands in stark contrast to that of international migrants, as no comparable welcoming services are provided for the rural migrants. Becoming oriented and settled in the vast city happens mainly with the help of relatives already in town, or through fellow workers from the same place of origin. The job search and employment contracts work in the same way, which results in complex dependencies among family members and people from the same village that are based on trust.

Generally, migrant workers endure extremely lengthy working hours that do not allow for sufficient rest overnight. The lack of mechanisms to ensure that labour rights are upheld leads to job exploitation on several levels: often workers are not paid the agreed-upon wages, have to work unpaid hours of overtime at night, and are subject to considerable uncertainty with regard to future work. They often have little savings left after sending remittances home to their families. Due to hukou regulations, migrant workers are excluded from the social benefits provided by the state, and regional differences in social insurance prevent highly mobile migrant workers from effectively insuring themselves. In conclusion, it is obvious that minimum standards of human rights and labour regulations are consistently violated by the existing working conditions on construction sites in and around Shanghai.

4.2.3 Living Conditions

The living conditions of migrant construction workers, like their working conditions, do not meet housing standards as defined by Article 25 of the Universal Human Rights. The prefabricated dormitories on site, where construction workers tend to live, usually have no insulation and are far from meeting standards of decent living. They have one water source, which is usually outside, and no access to hot water. The shelters offer no privacy with up to six people living in one small room; additionally, living on site exposes them to enforcement (e.g., of working hours) by the employer. Precarious circumstances for construction workers can be found worldwide and while at first glance in Chinese cities there do not seem to be whole districts with substandard housing such as slums, there are huge numbers of people affected by these low living standards. Just as construction sites are scattered throughout the city, substandard dwellings for workers are decentralized and not always immediately visible.

Fig. 7: Taicang construction site visit

4.2.4 Social Situation

Given the situation of a rapidly growing construction sector enabled by over 40 million construction workers in China, it is incomprehensible that they still don't get social recognition for being the motor of the economic miracle. Since about 80% of urban growth in China is caused by rural-urban migration (Fan, 2008). The integration of these migrants into urban life seems long overdue if the objective is ensuring the

ISBN: 978-3-9503110-2-0 (CD-ROM); ISBN: 978-3-9503110-3-7 (Print)
Editors: Manfred SCHRENK, Vasily V. POPOVICH, Peter ZEILE, Pietro ELISEI

existence of a humane urban environment. An analyze of the "degree of intermingling" in urban spaces of rural construction workers is rather redundant, as the reasons for their isolated life within the city and for their non-use of public (open) space in Shanghai have been shown in detail in the previous chapters.

While the hukou system is being reformed by the government, it hasn't had a positive impact for the migrant workers yet. However, the national framework for working and living conditions can't be changed by the employer, but of course other layers can. The intensification and extension of the urbanization process with all its side effects for the people involved has led to various survival strategies and support programs, but the turning point where public opinion – including temporary residents – is actually changing the ways in which the urban environment is currently managed, has yet to come.

4.3 Reflecting on Both Case Studies

Reflecting on the two case studies and our research methods, we are aware that we have provided insight into only a small number of the many aspects of the urban phenomena occurring in China's cities. Social reality can be approached from many different ways and from different angles, thus we had to make the difficult decision of which scientific approach to take to best illuminate the urban phenomenon of migrants within the construction process in Shanghai. As described in the research methods of both case studies, we chose different approaches for the two social groups, including participant observation, ethnographic research, and action research.

5 SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Chinese urbanism in general and in Shanghai in particular is extremely rapid. It is not only economic and political changes that have led to this rapid urban development, but structural changes in society have also made the ongoing transformation of urban China possible. Post-reform urban development has been driven by increasingly opening policy, as well as the progression of the market economy on the one hand, and rising consumerism and individualism on the other (Davis, 2000). In 1984 real estate enterprises began dealing with the urban housing market, which was previously regulated by the Chinese state. With the implementation of new reforms different income groups emerged and led to the rapid development of urban housing in the 1990s. The Chinese urban housing market began to integrate the needs and demands of consumers and paid more attention to comfort and higher living standards. At the same time the freedom of choice in housing led to the differentiation, reconfiguration, and segregation of urban space (Li Xiangning and Zhang Xiaochun, 2008).

This dynamic urbanization can be seen not only in physically perceivable urban space, but also in the fast-paced working and living conditions to which the inhabitants are subjected. (Ribbeck, 2000). While society adapts quickly to new circumstances (for example, working migrants and specialists from abroad recognize and take advantage of opportunities), architecture does not seem to take the resulting new requirements of temporary life into account during the process of architectural production. As city planning in Shanghai does not succeed in meeting the quantitative requirements of the latest developments in migration flows, it is clear that "planners of Shanghai's municipal development often ignore [migrant workers] as if they did not exist" (Wang Xiaoming in Bridge and Waston, 2011, p.401).

When conducting research on temporary residents of Shanghai, no matter which circumstances led them to being temporary, it becomes obvious that they are disadvantaged when compared to local urban citizens. Excluded street communities are not considered part of the public by politicians, architects, and planners. They are not viewed as communities of their own. They lack legal and political power in China and therefore these groups are excluded from city planning and architectural practice. The basic human rights of decent living and working conditions are not regulated for them by the formal system and, while global urban nomads are often able to compensate for the lack of state benefits at their own cost, rural urban nomads cannot afford this kind of support on their own. They have the social status of being guests or aliens in the city and therefore have no political voice in decisions. There is a trend in Chinese real estate business to du shen da zao (度身打造), a term literally meaning "measuring your body to make it just for you". But these purpose-built and tailor-made areas are only for selected consumer groups. Although migrant workers are building the city, they have not managed to create a visible and empowered urban nomadic society; the migrants are usually invisible and marginalized in architectural culture and discourse as well as in practice.

Expats have been discovered as consumers of support services, media, and residential compounds and other enclosed spaces, but their needs as temporary citizens within the urban realm are not sufficiently taken into account by designers and decision-makers. Depending on the planning systems in question – public or private – foreigners only influence projects where affluent consumers are the target group. Beyond this, we believe that expats are more than a consumer group reliant upon capital; they are permanently temporary urban citizens, and this status calls for their further sustained social, political, economic, and spatial engagement. In this paper we argue in support of urban nomads' contributions to city life. The human potential of cities is determined by users of the city; these users are intimately implicated in the potential of these cities to provide the benefits of better urban and social infrastructure to their residents. In a city where certain areas are home to more "aliens" than local residents, it is imperative that city planning take the needs of these residents into account, ideally through a participatory planning process.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Situating Our Work within the Research Landscape

In terms of the position of our paper among other scientific work, the multilayered approach we have taken has engaged with several areas of research within the interdisciplinary field of critical urban studies. Our research bridges the disciplines of urban studies, project management, business studies, and migration research, as we have engaged with existing concepts of urban nomads in architecture. By doing so our intent was to forge a link between existing investigations and the present work.

Much work in migration studies has described in detail the divergent circumstances of migrant workers worldwide and within China. In an approach that differs from typical research on migrants, we have emphasised two aspects of these workers' mobility: a survival-based decision of people with no alternative combined with a strategic choice made by individuals actively realizing their identities. Further, we have highlighted the exceptional nature of the observed social groups, who are both not only migrants but also permanently temporary residents.

The rapid transformation of the urban environment is often described in the economics and business studies literature. This work highlights the ongoing building boom as representative of constant growth and as attractive to consumers. Although very precise in providing statistical data, these surveys are often quite one-sided as they do not consider the social and cultural aspects of this urban development. Similarly, the discipline of project management focuses on the construction phases and mechanisms to control them rather than on the actors involved in the process. We are left wondering: what are the mechanisms to supervise a fair and ethical construction process?

However, there are two reasons why we might have come to different conclusions than other scientific researchers. On the one hand we have taken an approach that combines scholarship from the above-mentioned disciplines, which has helped us to grasp the complex urban development occurring in Shanghai and has enabled us to make these observations a critical urban study. On the other hand, we had special access to the research field by approaching it from two sides at the same time. Various perspectives on two such different – but also similar – groups of working migrants gave us the opportunity to look at them through different eyes and thus not victimize them but rather search for possibilities for improvement of their circumstances. Although it directly addresses planners and architects, this paper is relevant to anyone working in the field of construction in China or planning on working there. To us, a critical discussion and consideration by architects and planners of the social circumstances in the construction industry in China is urgently needed; our analysis intends to be a beginning to just such a critical look at present circumstances. This paper illuminates particular areas within the production of space in Chinese cities where basic human rights and international labour rights are compromised and where change is urgently necessary.

6.2 Outlook and Prospects

Dealing with the topics of labour migration, multiculturalism, and the diversity of local and transnational identities will be a challenging issue in Shanghai over the next few years. Hence it remains necessary to further encourage intercultural exchange in planning as well as long-term project implementation. Based on the needs of Shanghai residents – even if they are just temporary like the observed groups – the aim should be to create liveable and unique environments. Increasing awareness of cultural and social issues among

architects, urban planners, and designers could lead to cities being shaped not only by economic and political decisions but by a greater focus on the inhabitants' needs. We strongly advocate and support such an approach and emphasize this through the call for "Cities for People, not for Profit". We call for an urbanism that responds to human needs rather than to the capitalist imperative of profit-making (Brenner, Marcus, Mayer, 2009), although of course both concerns are a part of urban development and must coexist.

In the age of globalization, and particularly in China, buildings are becoming bigger, higher, and increasingly complex. And while additional technology and greater numbers of people are involved in the building process, it seems as if the profession of architecture has hardly changed. Successful architects still see themselves as creators, as master builders and designers of the built environment, where success, reputation, and image usually count more than shared social responsibility. Here we wish to add a social layer to the ongoing green building debate and promote the transfer of concepts like "Fair Wear" and "Fair Trade" to the construction industry. While a trend toward sustainable urban development has become measurable through certifications like LEED, this is a call for "FAIR BUILDING", which entails the need for an ability to track building processes and building transactions on a social level.

Throughout our research we have contemplated how we, who at the time were not directly involved in any construction processes, could go a step beyond simply describing the present circumstances. Following the approach of Social Entrepreneurship we found a way to position ourselves with our concept "Lüxing Laoshi," which aims to improve the social consequences of the production of space.

Our idea is to establish a training program for migrant construction workers in order to strengthen their working skills. We propose to do this by setting up a part-time education centre in a vocational school that focuses on building trades and handcrafting skills. The training program aims to provide adequate education for rural migrant workers and encourages improved cultural understanding of global migrant workers. As there are so many different stakeholders in the construction process, it is now more important than ever that those involved have the skills necessary to understand and communicate with one another. By providing the needed infrastructure in the city, by intensifying existing networks, and by providing the opportunity for regular and spontaneous interaction, Lüxing Laoshi supports migrant workers involved in the construction process and helps them to determine the course of their own lives.

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ISBN: 978-3-9503110-2-0 (CD-ROM); ISBN: 978-3-9503110-3-7 (Print)
Editors: Manfred SCHRENK, Vasily V. POPOVICH, Peter ZEILE, Pietro ELISEI