

# CULTURAL CAPITAL, SPATIAL PRODUCTIONS: CASES OF TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS FROM SHANGHAI

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## Abstract

Shanghai's urban development has come to represent China's rapid economic growth and global integration following the country's accelerated transition to market economy since the 1990s. Shanghai's growing skylines, roaring highways and then its glitzy malls, manicured golf courses and new themed satellite towns, are touted by the media as physical manifestations of the pace and quantity of the city's urban developments. But it is in the centrally-located historic neighborhoods at the western end of the French concessions, where little study has been done, that socio-demographic, cultural, and economic changes influencing processes of urban transformation at the everyday scale is producing the new international trend quarter with a vibe and look echoing the likes of Berlin's Prenzlauerberg or New York's Williamsburg. Creative global citizens flock to live and work in the area because of the horizontal and vertical networks that connect their design startups and work-share studios to global and local creative networks.

As is in most post-socialist cities, the return of capital and consumer demand generated commercial and spatial opportunity. Unique to Shanghai as a former global city is the extremely rapid usurping of international trends in the grasping of these opportunities. The constellation of returning diaspora compelled by both nostalgia and pragmatism, expats attracted by the city's historic global connections, and expediently learning and commercial-minded local stakeholders not only facilitate the re-plugging of Shanghai into the global market but are becoming the active residents and users of the city center area that has been for decades shirked by the local residents reminded of compulsory socialization, privacy deprivation and building dilapidation pre-reform.

Within the span of two decades, globalized entrepreneurial innovation articulated through spatial transformations. The influx of investment as well as knowhow have created dynamic spatial production systems that are currently showcasing reuse and reprogramming of existing structures in more variety and scales than developed models in the west. Shanghai-based design ateliers are more likely to horizontally network with like-minded comrades in other global cities while within the local value chain sourcing the most efficient production for designs. New platforms for knowledge production where design enterprises converge and exchange are social, temporal and spatial: design clusters working with fluid and flexible timeframes take place in the accessible and open forms.

Through detailed case studies of the urban transformations at the architectural, neighborhood, city scales, and how they recalibrate the drivers, agents, urban networks and reuse physical structures, key questions will be raised as to what are the specific urban resources that form and mark the areas of study as generator of cultural and creative capital? What are the types of urban transformations

(typological, functional, actors) that have they Shanghai's global integration, on the economic, social and cultural levels?

Keywords: cultural capital, transnational networks, Shanghai