



Fulong Wu, *Planning for Growth: Urban and Regional Planning in China*,

New York & London, Routledge, RTPI Library Series, 2015, 248 pp.

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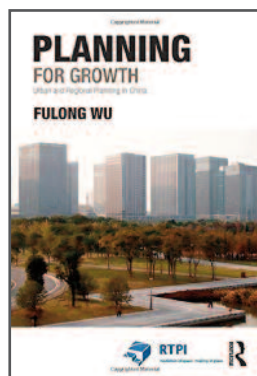
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of the rising power of China and its strengthening sense of destiny, presided over by Xi Jinping since 2012.

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NICOLAS DOUAY

Fulong Wu, professor at the Bartlett School of Planning at University College London, is one of the foremost experts on China's urban development and spatial planning. His latest work is bound to become a reference text offering a large panorama of transformations in urban and regional planning in China since the twentieth century. Taking a deep historical perspective, the book examines the evolution of institutional frameworks and actors as well as the content of spatial planning policies. The book's main focus is on changes in urban and regional planning practices. At first gradually marginalised and discredited with the advent of the communist regime, these practices resumed from the late 1970s as the country opened up. The book's main thesis is the idea that spatial planning has become a key element in the process of urbanisation and economic growth. Thus, whereas in the West, spatial planning has often been seen as an enemy of economic development by proponents of neo-liberalism, in China, it is their greatest ally.

The book is divided into seven chapters dealing with the main historical periods as well as thematic issues. Numerous examples and case studies illustrate the arguments and help better understand contemporary spatial planning practices.

Chapter 1 underlines the existence of ancient practices of urban planning in China. Traditionally enclosed by walls, the cities were founded according to rules inspired by geomancy and *fengshui*. The Republic's establishment in 1911 opened up a propitious period for the development of urban planning in the largest agglomerations such as Shanghai or the then capital, Nanjing. Western influence is evident in modernised architecture and the construction of satellite towns in the periphery of big cities.

Chapter 2 examines the socialist period from 1949 until 1984, the year when urban reforms and regulations on urban planning were adopted. In the 1950s, spatial planning policies were Soviet-influenced and led to monumental architecture and the adoption of five-year plans. Spatial planning's main mission was to encourage and assist industrial development. After the disastrous "Great Leap Forward," planning stood accused

of having adopted unrealistic projects before being totally side-lined during the Cultural Revolution. Plans were abandoned in both big cities and small towns. It was only after 1978 and China's opening that an urban planning practice gradually re-emerged.

This resumption is the subject of Chapter 3, which deals with the organisation of the planning system following the adoption of a law on urban planning in 1990, one of whose main features was the transfer of competence to local authorities. There are three parallel plans in the five-year period: an urban and rural plan, a land use plan, and a socio-economic development plan. Each of these plans is overseen by a separate commission or ministry, which no doubt poses problems in coordinating objectives and resources.

The new planning system of 1990 is discussed in detail in Chapter 4, which notes the entrepreneurial turn in spatial planning. The planning practice has become less formal and more conceptual, especially in its forms of representation of a territorial project. This shift from spatial planning centred on resource allocation towards a more strategic form renders spatial planning into a tool at the service of development. In this sense, spatial planning is situated at the interface between the state and the market. It becomes an essential support for growth by providing space that would become the basis for the country's economic expansion.

Chapter 5 deals with the organisation of the planning system, with particular attention to changes in the state's role and its articulation through different local levels. The Pearl River Delta and the Yangzi Delta, which are the most dynamic regions economically, receive special attention. The study of different examples shows how the practice of urban planning by local governments helps justify an expansionist approach over the central administration in order to overcome regulatory constraints and seize new growth opportunities.

This economic growth focus of urban planning is the subject of Chapter 6, which examines the pro-development orientation of Chinese planning by discussing urban planning in new cities and eco-cities. Building new cities is a classic feature of Chinese spatial planning. As far back as 1948, Shanghai's metropolitan plan envisaged the construction of satellite towns. These urbanisation projects symbolise the pro-development orientation of Chinese planning and today take the form of mega projects. The construction of eco-cities, meanwhile, highlights the attempt to give effect to a sustainability accent in urban planning. However, the practical reality is that these projects are subject to contingencies of local power politics and investors' criteria of real estate profitability.

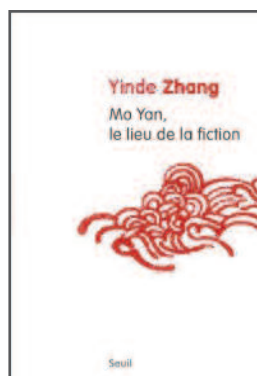
The final chapter analyses the impact of pro-market transition on spatial planning. The role of public authorities has been reduced, especially their ability to allocate resources, and has been partly replaced by market mechanisms. Since the 1990s, there has been a proliferation of plans lacking legal basis while aiming to promote development. This process cannot be attributed solely to the intensity of economic growth but is also due to the very nature of the Chinese practice of spatial planning. Wu offers three explanations for this practice. First, planning survived this transition period, as it was able to adapt to the new market context and became an instrument for territorial marketing. Second, the adoption of market mechanisms posed new social and environmental challenges necessitating the implementation of spatial planning and development policies. The third explanation is that market mechanisms were introduced in China in order to enlarge the scope of capital accumulation rather than to reduce the state's dominant role. Thus it is planning in favour of growth rather than of

the market, as the state remains at the centre of regulatory mechanisms. With this last explanation, Wu returns to the book's main thesis: contrary to Western neo-liberal vision, Chinese town planning is not an enemy of growth but its main tool.

This book will be welcomed by scholars and students interested in China and who wish to understand one of the key elements of China's transition. Scholars and students of urban planning may also find in it elements for reflection and comparison on changes in the styles of urban planning in its theoretical and practical dimensions so as to better understand the reality and process of urbanisation in China and elsewhere.

■ Translated by N. Jayaram.

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Yinde Zhang,
Mo Yan, le lieu de la fiction
(Mo Yan, the Place of Fiction),
Paris, Seuil, 2014, 319 pp.

FANNY FONTAINE

After publishing many works on contemporary Chinese literature, such as *Le monde romanesque chinois au XX^e siècle: modernités et identités* (The World of Chinese Fiction in the Twentieth Century: Modernities and Identities), *Le Roman chinois moderne 1918-1949* (The Modern Chinese Novel, 1918-1949), and *Littérature comparée et perspectives chinoises* (Comparative Literature and Chinese Perspectives), Yinde Zhang, professor of Chinese Studies and director of research at the Centre d'études et de recherches comparatistes (Centre of comparative studies and research) at Sorbonne Nouvelle University-Paris 3, turns his focus here to a contemporary Chinese writer already known to the public: Mo Yan, winner of the 2012 Nobel Prize in Literature.

A former member of the People's Liberation Army and a native of Shandong, this writer, whose pen-name means "don't speak" (莫言 *mo yan*), has already been the focus of abundant critical works centring on various analyses that very often veer between two stumbling blocks: excessive particularisation or excessive generalisation. While some concentrate solely on his biography, others identify him with an exotic image of China, while still others paint him as the paragon of contemporary Chinese or world literature. Nevertheless, part of the academic critique has turned towards the study of certain thematic and formal elements of his work, for example its connection with history and memory, its social critique of contemporary China, and the formal procedures of writing.

In this context, Yinde Zhang, who has worked extensively on the notion of identity, adopts an original approach, offering us a monograph that views Mo Yan's work from a spatial perspective. The title of the book, "Mo Yan, le lieu de la fiction" (Mo Yan, the place of fiction), gives already an idea of the importance of territory in this study, as the focus is placed on one particular location, Gaomi, the writer's birthplace.

The appeal of this work lies in its positioning at the crossroads between the local and the universal, identity and otherness. Indeed, Yinde Zhang analyses Mo Yan's work "in its three-dimensional aspect encompassing memory, critique and the imaginary" (p. 18). In other words, he studies the latter's work as a place that represents a space of the body (bodily memory), a critical space, and a space for the imaginary. To study Mo Yan is to "explore his work with fresh eyes, at the point where history meets fiction, the real meets the imaginary, and the local meets the global" (p. 25). It means "stepping away from one's birthplace" – as the writer himself stated in 1992 – leaving one's place of origin, Gaomi, and studying all of its symbolic dimensions, by means of which Mo Yan has transformed a real place into a literary and imaginary non-place, free of any political or literary ideology: "Gaomi is a place of the word, as much as a place of fiction. It is a reinvented territory" (p. 12).

Therefore, in an approach that is both monographic and chronological, Yinde Zhang has studied Mo Yan's "place of fiction" at several levels: he first looks at the writer's creative space, examining the sensory, rational, and imaginary dimension of his work, before viewing each work as an independent territory within this space.

The first part, "L'œuvre en contexte" (The work in context) therefore sets out a symbolic process that can be read throughout the work. It starts with Mo Yan's biography, not from a biographical perspective, but to emphasise the extent to which the autobiographical place acts as a foundation from which a profusion of stories emerges, feeding on legends, imagination, and on an historical or indeed mythical time depth: that of China. Gaomi is the original place, a starting point for a fictionalisation of history. It is the place of expression of the body, of matter, of the earth, at the infinitely subtle level of individual sensitivity, or at the mythical level of outlandish family sagas. Yinde Zhang leads us ably through Mo Yan's "creative and sensory journey."

In a remarkably structured work, the author next turns to Gaomi as the place of a controversial statement that reveals Mo Yan's critical power, in terms of both the comical and the ironic. The literary place then becomes a theatre stage where the writer can use his detached voice to undermine any form of power. This subversive statement first manifests itself in the oral and vernacular dimension of the writing, which offers a return to a language that fluctuates between the spoken and written word, that expresses the rhythm of the earth and in which the subject enjoys freedom of speech. This gives the reader access to the language of the people, but reinvented.

Finally, Yinde Zhang dwells on an inescapable trait of the writer: the subversive use of irony that colours all established social discourse, from state ideology to the literary *doxa*: no matter how nationalist, in favour of an increased birth rate, or epic the language might be, all passes through Mo Yan's filter of exuberant and ferocious verve.

The second part, "Une topographie romanesque" (A novel-by-novel topography), studies Mo Yan's novels as independent islands linked symbolically into a network, shifting from the journey taken by the writer's creative identity to the journey of the works themselves, the frame of refer-