

Political Implications of Transmedia Mobility in Contemporary China (2010–2015)

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1. Introduction

'Transmedia storytelling,' according to Henry Jenkins means the technique of telling a single narrative that systematically unfolds across multiple forms of media (Jenkins 2011). Transmedia storytelling expands a narrative rather than simply expanding media marketing tools. Applying Jenkins' conception in a broad sense, this paper focuses on the political implications of transmedia 'experience'. In particular, this study focuses on changes in the voluntary, participatory and active aspects of transmedia experience, which I call 'transmedia mobility.' It explores the question of

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how such changes reflect and influence the shaping of socio-political subjectivity in China. In this article, transmedia experience connotes the experience that 'transcends' media such as the interface between the media and other entities like architecture and the body as well as the interaction between different forms of media.

Similar to 'transnational,' transmedia itself does not guarantee innovative or alternative culture; on the contrary, both words of transnational and transmedia have been hijacked by entrepreneurial marketing, which is also the case in contemporary China. By investigating representative transmedia experiences in 2010s' China, this article argues that transmedia space is a field of struggles between the contrasting forces of dominance and resistance; that the struggles are influenced by socio-political power dynamics at a given historical moment; and that currently Chinese transmedia experiences reflect the domination of postmodern consumerism. Around 2010, voluntary and participatory characteristics of transmedia practice may have anticipated the emergence of the alternative and resistant socio-political subject but such potential seems to have been greatly subsumed by ever-expanding commercialism in the country, if not the world.

Firstly this study discusses transmedia mobility in the cultural phenomena surrounding the Chinese machinima (*jixie dianying* or *yingqing dianying*), 'War of Internet (Game) Addiction' (*Wangyin zhanzheng* 2010). The 64-minute-long machinima which was produced by Chinese amateur gamers, was more popular than *Avatar* in 2010. It was an interesting extension of the MMORPG, *World of Warcraft* and was also an ironical reference to the Opium War. The gamers' voluntary project of continuing the *WoW* narrative in a new form of media, machinima, showed a sign of

political mobility. It was the post-80s generation (*balinghou*)'s outright manifesto that defied the sociopolitical reality of contemporary China. The fan art voices strong discontent with the government's control of the media and entertainment, and also dissatisfaction with the harsh economic circumstances for the young generations.

Secondly it explores the political significance of the 'mobile audience' as seen in the *ScreenSpaces* at the Shanghai Expo 2010. This article attempts to develop the idea of *ScreenSpace* which was proposed in my previous study by delving into more concrete physical aspects. The concept of *ScreenSpace* leads us to explore the interfaces between the body and technology and also between the virtual and the physical realities.¹⁾ 'Space' is also beneficial for examining how various forms of power, including political power, penetrate and operate in our everyday life. *ScreenSpace* highlights the dimension of experience, in particular, the 'tactile' experience of the space where screens exist rather than the experience of 'viewing' the screen.²⁾ In order to delve into the physical experience of moving in the *ScreenSpace*, I will compare the experience of

1) The term, 'ScreenSpace' follows the theoretical developments in media studies, for example, as shown in Nick Couldry and Anna McCarthy's formulation of 'MediaSpace' and also in Lev Manovich's 'Augmented Space' (Couldry and McCarthy 2004; Manovich 2006, 219-240). Both concepts reflect the scholars' attempt to illuminate the convergence between media and space. A well-known geographer, Doreen Massey points out that, 'space' connotes the process and the relationship. (Massey 2005) So the term, 'space' directs our attention to the process of production, distribution and consumption rather than media content.

2) Integrating Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin's insightful thoughts on the urban experience, Michael Taussig conceptualizes the 'tactile optics' or the 'optical unconscious' to indicate tactile and unconscious apprehension of the everyday world in the modern viewing experience (Taussig 1991). He stresses the importance of analyzing the 'distracted collectivity' as well as the 'contemplative individual' and sees the 'everyday is a question not of universal semiotics but of capitalist mimetics' (Taussig 1991, 151).

the *ScreenSpace* in the China pavilion with that in the Saudi Arabia pavilion which also requires the visitors to move around to view the massive size screen. The two pavilions that combine the characteristics of indoor and outdoor *ScreenSpaces* invite us to explore complexities of the new *ScreenSpace*. I view such a *ScreenSpace* as a subtle manifestation of the changing or an emergent screen culture of the world and discuss the sociopolitical implications of the physical experience of the *ScreenSpace*. Does the 'mobile spectator' in the new *ScreenSpace* anticipate the revival of the state-organized mass mobility or an alternative form of collectivity?

Thirdly this article examines the experience of big outdoor screens on the Bund, Shanghai, in particular, the CITI Tower building's big screen. Both pedestrians and drivers and both tourists and the city's residents view the screens consciously and unconsciously. The outdoor big screens on the Bund are compared with the canopy screens of the shopping malls in Suzhou and Beijing. As the big screen has become an integral urban condition in mega cities like New York, scholars have paid special attention to the potential of outdoor screens for urban society. The cities try to present the outdoor big screens as each city's landmark. The Shanghai municipal government has been keen on claiming the city's global status with dynamic nocturnal light-scape, representatively the Bund's illuminated, animated screen-scape. Through fieldwork in Shanghai, this paper investigates how the use of urban buildings as 'information surface' has increased the actual and potential power of cities to serve as sites of political and corporate communication and also how the information-based function of outdoor big screens have been changed into the amusement-centred shock experience. This study explores how the seemingly more active and mobile experience of viewing intensifies passive

and monotonous ways of reception. It seems that physical mobility of the viewing subject has little to do with political mobility of the subject.

2. *War of Internet Addiction*: The Post-80s generation's Transmedia Storytelling

War of Internet Addiction (*Wangyin zhanzheng*, hereafter *WIA*) is a 64 minute-long machinima which criticises the Chinese government's control of the MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game), *World of Warcraft*. Machinima is a cinematic production created by using computer graphics engines, often those of video games. It can be seen as a representative form of transmedia storytelling. It took about three months for one hundred gamers to complete the Chinese machinima and the production cost for this voluntary project was zero. After its release on tudou.com in January 2010, it became an immediate hit and was banned in some of the video sharing sites like youku.com. This collective transmedia fan art originated from the *WoW* and is devoted to the game but its popularity expanded beyond the game community. The machinima's popularity is often stressed by the fact that the number of its viewers exceeded that of *Avatar* which was released in the same month. *WIA* recorded 10 million views within a month. The producer, nicknamed 'SexyCorn' in a writing interview, exhibits the post-80s generation's—as he identifies himself, frustration and discontent about the harsh social environments and also resistance against the government's control and demonization of gamers.

First of all, *WIA* indicates the changing status of the Chinese MMO

players in the international *WoW* gamers' community. Three years before the production of *WIA* in China, the international, in particular western *WoW* fan communities cheered for a machinima entitled 'Ni Hao: A Gold Farmer's Story' by 'Nyhm' of 'Madcow Studios.' This music video type machinima was extremely popular after its uploading on the *WoW* machinima site, Warcraftmovies.com and also on YouTube in August 2007: it has been viewed 823,436 times on warcraftmovies.com and 7,078,674 times on YouTube (accessed 2 October 2015). The machinima shows a strong feeling of disgust at Chinese gold farmers and in this phenomenon, Lisa Nakamura, a scholar of media studies, finds virtual racism against Asians shared by amateur gamers in the US. The lyrics of the music video-type-machinima are as follows:

I see you farmin primals in Shadow moon Valley, 10 cents an hour's good money when you are Chinese, I buy your auctions you sell my gold right back to me, feels like you're bendin' me over, you smile and say 'ni hao' and farm some gold, 'ni hao' it's getting old, ni hao, oh

Gold farming originated from South Korea although it became to be identified as Chinese after it widely spread in China (Jin 2006). Nakamura tackles the issue of virtual racism with caution because 'virtual racism' can be a convenient but illogical label (Nakamura 2009). The term of racism is in the end based on 'physical' race. As well as such reasonable doubt raised by the author herself, the use of the word, 'anti-Asian' is also highly problematic because many Asian players such as Korean players also discriminated and hated Chinese gold farmers in the game space. The machinima, 'Ni Hao' offered amateur gamers with a chance to punish

'anti-fun' or 'commercial' behaviours of gold farmers and to release their hatred and anger towards the digital labourers.

Three years later, such an international perception of Chinese players did not correspond to reality any more as the number of Chinese MMO players rocketed to number one in the world and their participation in the game community is greatly active. The transition from *Ni Hao* to *WIA* seems to highlight a radical change in the racial power dynamics in the virtual game space.

Both *Ni Hao* and *WIA* share the gamers' communal feeling of strong hatred for 'anti-fun' forces of the world outside the virtual game space but *WIA* seems to have been driven by more socio-politically conscious acts than *Ni Hao* was. The main principle of computer game and machinima space is 'simulation', distinguished from 'representation' of a film and other media spaces (Burke 2013). Computer game and machinima space is plastic space based on mathematics and the simulated space does not represent the 'original' physical world. In particular, *WIA* was an in-universe machinima of which the entire story takes place in a fictional world. However, *WIA* may be an ironical involution which intervened tightly in the real world.

If spaces like a college campus provided an escape from the patriarchal and chaotic society in the early modern period's China, the virtual space seems an escape from the immediate physical reality of authoritarian and rapidly marketised society of contemporary China. As well known, the Chinese government has been controlling the media including the internet using various methods: the permission system, content censorship, the TV program and film quota, the Golden Time control, internet filtering such as the Green Dam Shield, hacking and the media propaganda such as the

demonization of computer gamers. The Chinese government restrained the release of the globally popular MMO, *WoW* around 2009 and also ordered to replace the image of skeleton in the game with that of a grave in the game. The young gamers' internationally shared visual language of 'fun' was violently substituted by the older generation Chinese politicians' boring language of 'correctness' and 'harmony' (*hexie*). It was an irritating and frustrating alarm for gamers that chaos and freedom are not allowed even in the virtual and imaginative space.

The defiant culture shared by both the producers and the viewers of the machinima does not seem to represent the current culture of social media in China in 2015. Transmedia space is influenced by the sociopolitical circumstances at a given time. It is a space which is reserved for hegemonic struggles between domination and resistance. As noted by Chris Jenkins and other media scholars, the expansion of transmedia storytelling can easily be the expansion of commodification, inflected by the power dynamics between contrasting social groups like different social classes and generations. It seems that ordinary users of the social media voluntarily and actively participate in the capitalist commodity culture. It does not seem applicable only to China but other parts of the world. The great popularity of the unpacking videos and 'haul girls' on the social media spaces like YouTube and Facebook in the US and Europe shows how much voluntary participation in the social media spaces is subsumed under entrepreneurial marketing activities. In China, the popularity of 'wei shang' (micro shops) and the abundance of commercial themes in 'wei dianying' (micro or mini film) also signals the dominance of consumerism and commercialism in the country's social media space. The participatory culture of transmedia storytelling does not necessarily indicate liberation

and alternative culture and currently the global dominance of neoliberalism influences the weakening of the resistant culture in the transmedia spaces.

3. Mobile Spectators in Indoor *ScreenSpaces*: The China Pavilion and the Saudi Arabia Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo

The virtual space of the Chinese machinima, *WIA*, was a simulated space of mise-en-abyme which ironically generated a huge impact in the outer world. If *WIA* was a voluntary project with anti-government sentiment, the animated scroll at the Shanghai Expo was a government commissioned project that celebrated the encounter between the high screen-technologies of the country and its 'glorious cultural inheritance'. If *WIA* expands the MMO game of *WoW*, the animated scroll expands the famous Song dynasty painting, 'The Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival', (*Qingming shanghe tu*, Zhang Zeduan), literally and symbolically. In this part, I will compare the *ScreenSpaces* in the China pavilion and the Saudi Arabia pavilion that combine the characteristics of the indoor and outdoor big screens and that reflect the recent changes in screen culture.

Among a number of big screens at the Shanghai Expo, the two screens at the China pavilion and the Saudi Arabia pavilion were generally regarded as the most impressive ones. The China pavilion (aka. The Oriental Crown: *Dongfang zhi guan*) and the Saudi Arabia pavilion (aka. The Tent City of Mina) were the most popular halls among more than 70 exhibition halls at the 2010 Shanghai Expo.³⁾ The main attractions of the

two pavilions were the magical spectacles of high-technology big screens.

It should be noted that the magical experience of a technological wonder at the China Pavilion works within the greater frame of social discourses. Going back to his conception of cinematic 'astonishment', Tom Gunning suggests 'astonishment' as a 'social practice' rather than merely an 'individual experience' or a 'natural phenomenon'. (Gunning 2004, 39-60) In particular, Gunning focuses on world expositions as a primary example of a social practice of astonishment.

The stimulus of sound and light, the prose of guidebooks and explanatory signs, make up the discursive positioning of the new technology in the Expositions and cued visitors to experience astonishment. (Gunning 2004, 43)

Thus, it is interesting to observe how the Chinese media including the official guidebook frame the 'astonishment' of the *ScreenSpace* experience. The '(digitally) animated version of the Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival' (*dianzidongtai ban Qingming shanghe tu*) is almost invariably introduced by the Chinese media as the Song dynasty's masterpiece that came to be magically 'enlivened' by the modern high technology of China (ex. '*Songdai guhua biancheng gaokeji donghua de zhuangguantujing*' at http://news.xinhuanet.com/gangao/2011-05/28/c_121469389.htm accessed 1 April 2013). It succeeds the Beijing Olympic opening ceremony's

3) The Shanghai Expo set records with 73 million visitors of which foreign visitors compose only less than 5%. It created 4,000 meter-long queues and for many visitors, the most time at the site was spent on queuing. To enter the China Pavilion, visitors had to obtain a special ticket in the morning which allocates the time to enter the hall and it had about 50,000 visitors a day while the Saudi Arabia Pavilion had about 30,000 visitors a day and 4,379,947 in total (<http://travel.cnn.com/shanghai/life/saudi-arabia-pavilion-ignites-shanghai-tourism-876483> Accessed 5 October 2015).

theme, the celebration of the meeting between the ancient 'Chinese wisdom' (Expo 2010 Official Guidebook 2010, 24) and the high technologies of 21st century's China. The nationalist practice of programming 'astonishment' became particularly powerful as the screen literally makes the 'motionless' painting 'animated' as if the ancient civilization which remained dormant for centuries regained a new life.

The concrete dimension of the bodily experience of the animated scroll can firstly be explained by 'distraction.' The animated scroll combines the experiences of outdoor and indoor big screens. Although it is the indoor, the spectators, unlike those in a movie theatre, move around to watch the animated painting. Scholars have paid attention to the significance of the mobile gaze. For instance, Audrey Yue, in her discussion of large screens in China, highlights 'a new mobile and hybrid gaze that is distracted, enchanted, panoptic and narcissistic' (Yue 2013, 365). The mobile spectators in the China pavilion have the distracted and hybrid gaze.

It was Walter Benjamin who theorized 'distraction' as the main mode of the modern cinematic perception. As well known, Walter Benjamin was one of the few scholars who did not cast solely negative light on 'distraction' of popular culture. 'Distraction' indicates the 'tactile', 'collective' and 'fragmentary' perception in the modern cinematic experience, which is distinguished from the solitary, contemplative appreciation of traditional art. Michael Taussig explains Benjamin's notion of 'distraction' as the 'everyday tactility of knowing' or the 'optical unconscious' (Taussig 1994, 149). In the age of film, the 'distracted collectivity' replaces the 'contemplative individual'. In other words, the masses' distracted mode of knowing replaced the bourgeois individual's contemplative mode of knowing in the cinematic perception. In rejection of argumentative,

systematic and solipsistic contemplation, Benjamin conjectures the culture of distraction as collective, habitual, everyday, non-instrumental (which parallels non-voluntary memory) and fragmentary.

As Benjamin's conception of 'distraction' is based greatly on the contrast between the spectator's experience of viewing a painting and that of a film, the animated version of a painting seems to raise a new set of questions about the 'distracted collectivity' and the 'contemplative individual.' Benjamin compares the screen on which a film unfolds with the canvas of a painting.

The painting invites the spectator to contemplation: before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so. No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed. It cannot be arrested...The spectator's process of association in the view of these images is indeed interrupted by their constant, sudden change. This constitutes the shock effect of the film, which, like all shocks, should be cushioned by heightened presence of mind (Benjamin 1969, 238).

Then, how is the digital reconstruction of a painting as moving images experienced by the spectator? Is the spectator's experience close to 'contemplation' of a painting or the 'shock effect' of the film? The transition from a painting into moving images seems even more complex in the case of a Chinese painting because the Chinese literati painting's aesthetic principle has been based on a more subjective practice of 'meditation' of the painter as well as 'contemplation' of the viewer. In the production of the animated painting scroll, the solitary, meditative practice of the painter was replaced by the collective, technological production. Yet Chinese

spectators may emulate or simulate the Song dynasty viewer's experience, which was culturally encoded in them. Above all, the viewing experience of the animated painting can be, at least in theory, more active and diverse than that of a film as the mobile spectator can control the speed and the focus of viewing. The audiences in contemporary movie theatres are supposed to abide by the behavioural codes of inactivity and silence, unlike the comingled entertainment space of early movie theatres (Hansen 1994: 90-125). Compared with the movie theatre, the *ScreenSpace* with the animated painting may allow more freedom for individual contemplation of the spectator. In the *ScreenSpace* of the China Pavilion, 'contemplation' interestingly issues from the physical 'mobility.'

'Mobility' in the *ScreenSpace* can also be conceived in the viewing experience of a 'scroll.' In viewing a scroll of a Chinese painting, the viewer's gaze unfolds from top to bottom or from the right to the left. The 'scroll' was also a dominant visual metaphor in the Beijing Olympic opening ceremony that attempts to deliver the sense of 'unfolding' history.

Focusing on the tactile experience of a space, I shift the discussion of the 'mobile gaze' to that of the 'mobile spectator'. My interest does not lie only in the interface between the screen and the eye but also in the interaction between the space that includes other people in it and the body. Then, what can be the political implications of the mobile audiences, in China and also in the world?

In order to delve into the issue of the mobile spectator, I will compare it with the *ScreenSpace* in the Saudi Arabia Pavilion in which spectators had also to move around to watch the screen. The discussions on 'responsive environments' in architecture will lead us to develop further the question on the bodily movement in the *ScreenSpaces*. Ian Bentley's

concept of 'responsive environment' means the built environment that 'provides its users with an essentially democratic setting, enriching their opportunities by maximizing the degree of choice available to them'.⁴⁾ The ideal, responsive environment is suggested as a democratic space with permeability, variety and personalization rather than the one that is heavily prefigured by the design. An empirical survey that applies Bentley's notion of 'responsive environments,' also demonstrates that people interacted with a space better when the space provides touchability, varieties and activities. Adopting the architectural ideas, I will compare the scope of touchability and activity in the two *ScreenSpaces*.

Both *ScreenSpaces* in the China Pavilion and the Saudi Arabia Pavilion seem to reflect the recent tendency of screen culture, which I call 'surround spectacle'. In a 'surround spectacle', one's bodily perception is greatly

4) (Bentley 1985, 9) Developing Ian Bentley's conception of 'responsive environments', a research team at Napier University, Edinburgh, carried out a comparative observation between CAVE (a fully immersive, six-sided cubicle) and HMD (a Head Mounted Display) to see 'how sense of place changes when the arenas are changed' (McCall etc. 2005: 35-73). The 'sense of place' is defined as 'the ability to understand content or feelings of space and size' and the sense of presence is 'feeling as if one is physically located in a mediated environment' and is related to physical properties, activities and meanings. In this empirical study, the authors found the importance of variety that is 'the range of activities, people and forms which exist within an environment': touchability that is 'the ability to touch items': and activities. The result of the survey shows that people show increased sense of place and presence in the HMD. Within the HMD space, people felt more scope for activities, nearness and ability to touch objects. 'The sense of presence will also increase as people are focusing on the content not the medium.' 'Activities' and 'touchability' seem more important for the sense of place and presence, in other words, to interact with the space better. In contrast to his favorable comments on distraction induced at the cinema, Benjamin's view on distraction at the world exhibition is more critical associating it with the nineteenth-century commodity culture. It seems that in Benjamin's ideas, distraction as an ideologically-driven practice and a 'mentally numbing response' is not a new, liberating mode of perception (Duttlinger 2007, 44).

immersed and thus anaesthetized by the overwhelming size of the art and technology, like in 'surround sound stereo'. An early example of such spaces is the 'Digital Sky' of the Langham Place in Hong Kong, which was constructed by the Jerde Partnership in 2004. The 'Digital Sky' spans the entire roof of the wall with '200 projectors, PCs, speakers and special effects lights' (Manovich 2006, 232). In recent years, cinemas and media events such as the SARFT Film Awards have also started to use 'surround spectacle' screens which use the three or four sides of the walls and the ceiling. Above all, quite a few of the 2010 Shanghai Expo exhibition halls including the US pavilion and corporate exhibition halls were equipped with 'surround spectacle' screens.

In terms of size, the Saudi Arabia Pavilion presents a screen which is about twice bigger than the animated scroll in the China pavilion. The animated scroll which covers the walls, is 6.3 meter high and 130 meter long while the Saudi Arabia pavilion boasts a 360-degree 1,600 square-meter cinema screen, probably the largest 3D IMAX theatre in the world (http://expo.shanghaidaily.com/pavilions_detail.asp?id=6, accessed 20 March 2013) at the time. Both screens in a massive scale present their own cultural heritages which were enlivened by the most advanced screen technologies. The 'Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival' is tuned into the Shanghai Expo's theme of the urban life well. The *ScreenSpace* in the Saudi Arabia Pavilion, 'the Arabian City', offers an incredible visualization of the Arabian nature, which almost creates the feeling of being in the cosmos. The *ScreenSpace* in the Saudi Arabia pavilion is more overwhelming and 'spectacular' than that in the China pavilion. The magical experience of the animated painting scroll is directed more to culture than to nature and the audience's feeling of amazement

is based on the details as well as the size.

The question of how the viewer moves is also significant in assessing the scope of activities and varieties. The China and Saudi Arabia pavilions had various kinds of transportation: the elevator, the conveyor belt and the roller coaster. However, in the *ScreenSpace* of the China pavilion, the viewers mainly walked while in the *ScreenSpace* of the Saudi Arabia pavilion, the spectators proceeded standing on the conveyor belt. Thus in the *ScreenSpace* of the China pavilion, the spectators are freer and more active in their physical movement than in the Saudi Arabia pavilion.

This comparative observation shows that in the 'surround spectacle' of the China Pavilion, mobility is unexpectedly linked with contemplation as well as with distraction. In fact, a Benjamin scholar, Carolyn Duttlinger sees both 'distraction and contemplation' as the 'two sides of the same, politically ineffective, coin' and finds a 'dialectics of concentration and distraction' in Benjamin's ideas. Duttlinger finds the 'child's non-instrumentalizing mode of attention' in the guise of *Geistesgegenwart* out of the dialectics (Duttlinger 2007, 39, 43, 44). From a dialectics between contemplation and distraction in the new *ScreenSpace*, I suggest the notion of 'contemplative collectives'.

A huge space surrounded by the screen walls can provide more possibilities for activity, variety and interactions between viewers, and the mobile spectator can be more 'responsive' to the environments than being 'programmed' by them. The conception of the 'mobile spectator' in the *ScreenSpace* can be associated with Manuel Castell's 'networked individualism' in the information age as both notions stress individual choices, flexible interactions and the new notion of space (Castells 2001). Ironically, the excessive use of screens or 'surround spectacle' may

implicate a possibility to imagine the end of the 'spectacle' paradigm (Debord 1994). The 'mobile spectator' can show both modes of perception, distraction and contemplation. With such conception of the 'mobile spectator', we can imagine the 'contemplative collective' that is aligned to 'collective intelligence' in the social media age.

4. Immersion in the Bund's Light-scape

Big screens are not limited to indoors, either for events or cinemas. Outdoor big screens have been increasing dramatically in Chinese metropolises.⁵⁾ Outdoor big screens make cityscape illuminating and animated and have become to compose our everyday experience and collective unconsciousness. The term, 'architectural skin' (Vera Buhlmann) shows how screens are experienced as architecture as well as showing how buildings become the media. Scott Mcquire believes 'a networked platform of large screens contribute to the formation of a transnational public sphere' where 'genuine public encounters' take place. In such spaces, Mcquire finds 'a delicate balance between personal participation and collective interaction, between active engagement and reflective contemplation' (Mcquire 2010, 580). Has such transnational, participatory experience become dominant in the experience of outdoor big screens in Chinese cities?

As the big screen has become an integral urban condition in mega cities like Shanghai and New York, scholars have paid special attention to the

5) It is also true that big screens are not ubiquitous as Chris Berry points out (Berry 2013). For instance, the second or third tier cities in China will not typically have a great number of big outdoor animated screens.

potential of outdoor screens for urban society. Robert Venturi's conception of architecture as 'information surface' and Lev Manovich's 'augmented space' are early examples of capturing the significant changes in experience of urban spaces. Appropriating the media facade or 'skin' of buildings for display, LED screens have become an important site of communication in the urban milieu. Manovich's conception of 'augmented space' highlights multiple dimensions of the human subject's experience beyond the 'old' geometric dimensions. 'Augmented space' is defined as 'the physical space overlaid with dynamically changing information, multimedia in form and localized for each user' and compared with 'virtual reality', in 'augmented reality', the physical space is not taken over by the virtual space (Manovich 2006: 219-225). Thus, in the concept, Manovich stresses the physical dimension and addresses it as an architectural question.

Shanghai at night has become one of the most animated and colourful cities in the world. In general, Shanghai's big screens are divided into four categories and they are exposed to average 600,000 people everyday: the Bund Area (270,000: 45%), the City Centre's Skyscraper Area (210,000: 35%), the Pudong Area (30,000: 5%) and other roads seen by cars and pedestrians (90,000: 15%) (Shanghai Municipality Tourism Bureau and the Shanghai Expo 600 day Preparation Leading Action Group).

In particular, outdoor big screens were designed to be the major attraction of the city's outlook before the Shanghai Expo 2010. In preparation for the 2010 Expo, the City Appearance Bureau (*Shi rong ju*) decided to tidy up the cityscape, in particular, commercial signs on streets, which were seen as 'too ugly'. After 2009, it was not allowed to install any more LED screens in commercial areas. In particular tourist attraction spots were tightly controlled by the municipal government. The numerous

small LED screens in the Bund area were cleared before the Shanghai Expo and accordingly smaller-sized advertising media companies went out of business.

The skyscrapers on the Pudong side were instead made the new landmarks of the 21st century Shanghai and the most photogenic spot for tourists. For instance, the CITI tower LED screen in Pudong, which was the world's biggest outdoor LED colour screen for some time (139.6 meter high and 43.2 meter wide), was presented as the city's 'namecard'. The CITI tower LED screen was built in 2005 with the most developed LED technologies of the time. The outdoor big screen advertising company, *Bundstar Media*, has been responsible for managing the landmark screen and according to Xu Hao, marketing director of *Bundstar Media*, the Shanghai municipal government liked the company's presentation in which the screen was described as the city's namecard (*mingpian*).⁶⁾



6) *Bundstar Media* installs and manages advertising screens in Lujiazui and other parts of Shanghai, worked closely together with the Shanghai Expo Coordination Bureau, the Shanghai Spiritual Civilization Department and the Shanghai Tourist Bureau (www.shcitower-led.com <http://www.slideshare.net/fullscreen/maggiestation/shanghai-bund-citi-bank-led-outdoor-screen>). The CITI tower screen became archaic after 8 years and the company rebuilt it in order to make it function during the daytime and also the 1.8 meter edges disappear.

Outdoor big screens are located midway between the public and the private. As much as the outdoor big screen is part of a building or a vertical extension of private property, it is also the media with public functions. The CITI tower LED screen's playing time seems to reflect such a midway position: 50 percent of the screening time is spent for public campaigns and advertisements and 50 percent for commercial advertisements. The screening time spans 6 pm to 11 pm everyday in winter and 6:30 till 11:30 pm in summer. It has been calculated that such advertising screens that can be seen from the Bund were exposed to 10 million people every week and the CITI Tower Screen's advertising fee was 300,000 RMB per hour in 2013.⁷⁾

As the governmental and the commercial content share the same space of the screen shortly alternating each other, in the spectator's mind, the border between the two may blur. On the one hand, it represents the neoliberal trend in which the entrepreneurial language and operation styles infiltrate our everyday life including the public sector. On the other hand, it reflects the political dominance of everyday life in contemporary China. The political discourses of the post-Mao era from 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics' (*Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi*) through 'Relatively well-off society' (*Xiaokang shehui*) and 'Harmonious society' (*Hexie shehui*) to 'Chinese Dream' (*Zhongguo meng*), the CCP's strong dominance over the nation has never been loosened. For instance, during the Oriental Star incident in 2015, outdoor big screens in Shanghai such as those in Huaihai middle road and Lujiazui played a short mourning video made by the government every few minutes. Ordinary people's commercial and

7) Yet one of the company's managing staff told me that the actual price is (significantly) cheaper than it.

leisure activities of shopping are interrupted by the grave governmental message on the big screens of the shopping mall buildings. The screen is an important way of projecting the current Xi Jinping regime's 'Chinese Dream' discourse. The political slogan claims that the individual's dream for success should be contained or guided by the national, collective dream. Through outdoor big screens, the masses are regularly reminded of the importance of the collective, the nation. If Hu Jintao's political motto of 'harmony' in the 2000s was delivered mainly through the *written words* 'hexie' on political banners or ticker tape screens on the street, Xi Jinping's political vision of 'Chinese dream' in the 2010s which highlights soft power and the creative industries is represented mainly through *moving images* either on TV screens or big outdoor screens.

The city's Bureau of Industry and Commerce is in charge of censoring the content of big screen advertisements. Although my interviewee, Ms Zhou in the Huangpu Department of Advertisement in the Bureau of Commerce and Industry denied the existence of censorship on big screen advertisements in the city, the other interviewees at the media advertising companies such as Advisionmedia and Bundstar Media acknowledged its existence although they found it 'inappropriate' to provide the details to me. Although it was not written in the Advertisement Law, the companies were instructed not to use the superlative, 'zui' (the most or the best) in the advertisement of outdoor big screens. Interestingly, the restrictions were officially included in the newly issued advertising law which came into effective on 1 September 2015: (Chapter 2, article 9-3) 'Use of words such as 'national-level', 'the most' and 'the best', among others is not allowed in advertising.'

The urban canopy screens of the shopping malls in Suzhou and Beijing

seem to mark the outdoor big screen's transition in its transmedia experience from getting information to the magical experience of an amusement park. The New Sky Screen in the Harmony Time Square Shopping Mall in Suzhou is currently claimed to be the biggest or the longest outdoor screen in the world (350 m X 16 m) and the Place Shopping Mall in Beijing also has similar roof screens for shoppers/pedestrians. The surround spectacle screen as seen in the Saudi Arabia Pavilion has been found as a barrel vault canopy in Las Vegas and other entertainment cities. The modern arcade's glass roof has now been replaced by the high-tech LED vault screen. The outdoor big screens in China have become dominated by the government and a number of big brands. The main functions have become political campaign and propaganda and mesmeric entertaining and advertisements, rather than delivering information and inviting participation. The possibility of the emergence of the 'contemplative collective' seems currently overpowered by the strong neoliberal bond between the state and great entrepreneurs.

5. Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to explore the issue of mobility generated by transmedia experience in terms of active participation, changes of media forms and content, and the creation of alternative and resistant culture. Firstly, I have examined the transmedia storytelling seen in the popularity of the Chinese machinima, *WIA*. The Chinese gamer-generation created participatory, resistant collective culture crossing the MMO game space and the machinima space, and the virtual space and the physical

space. If such a phenomenon represented the nascent transmedia experience of China in 2010, the participatory and voluntary mobility of transmedia experience has now become to be dominated by consumerism and commercialism. Secondly, based on my fieldwork, I have explored the notion of the 'mobile spectator' investigating the *ScreenSpaces* of the China and Saudi Arabia Pavilions during the 2010 Shanghai Expo. I have analysed the *ScreenSpace* of the China pavilion focusing on the concepts of tactility, distraction, mobility and contemplation. Compared with the 'surround spectacle screen' in the Saudi Arabia Pavilion, that in the China pavilion provides more possibilities for activities, varieties, touchability and personalities. The mobile spectator in such a *ScreenSpace* can show more subjective responses and intense interactions with other audiences. Here I suggest the notion of 'contemplative collectives.' In this *ScreenSpace*, mobility is unexpectedly linked to contemplation and the 'surround spectacle' may ironically anticipate the end of the spectacle paradigm in the new screen age. However, the Chinese metropolises seem to have favoured the mesmeric, immersing surround spectacle as seen in the Saudi Arabia pavilion over the 'contemplative tactility' as seen in the China pavilion. Thirdly, I have discussed the changing culture of outdoor big screens in Chinese metropolises, in particular in Shanghai. The Bund in Shanghai presents one of the most dazzling screen-scapes in the world which can be seen as the visual sign of the city's global initiative and also of the strong coalition between the state and large corporations.

In this paper, I have argued that the voluntary, participatory nature of transmedia experience including the tactile experience of indoor *ScreenSpace* is not necessarily linked to the alternative and liberating politics but is influenced by the sociopolitical dynamics of hegemony

struggles at a given time. Resistant and alternative culture of transmedia mobility as observed in 2010's China seems to have greatly weakened in 2015's China.

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〈국문제요〉

헨리 젠킨스가 정의하는 트랜스미디어 서사 (스토리텔링)는 여러 개의 미디어 형식에 걸쳐 펼쳐지는 하나의 통일된 서사를 의미한다. 즉 마케팅을 위한 다양한 미디어의 사용을 의미하지는 않는다. 그러나 현재 트랜스내셔널과 마찬가지로 트랜스미디어라는 개념도 기업의 마케팅 등을 위한 용어로서 주로 사용되며 이러한 현실은 고도의 상업주의가 발달한 전세계적 현실을 반영한다고도 할 수 있다. 이 논문에서는 트랜스미디어를 트랜스미디어 스토리텔링과 더불어 미디어를 넘어서는 문제에 대한 고민으로도 사용한다. 즉, 미디어와 건축, 미디어와 신체의 관계를 논하며 트랜스미디어적 경험을 탐구한다. 특히 트랜스미디어적 경험에서 흔히 기대하는 (사회정치적) 역동성이 실제 중국의 트랜스미디어 경험에서 어떻게 나타나는지를 2010년에서 2015년까지의 대표적 트랜스미디어 경험을 연구하며 살핀다. 2010년 선풍적 인기를 얻었던 <인터넷 중독 전쟁>이라는 마시니마와 상해 엑스포 중국관, 사우디아라비아관의 스크린 경험, 상해 푸동의 시티 타워 스크린을 와이탄에서 보는 경험 등을 살피며 미디어와 신체, 건축 등의 관계를 토론한다. 이 논문은 트랜스미디어 공간, 경험, 역동성이 선험적으로 해방적, 대안적 문화로 결정되어 있는 것이 아니라 그 역사적 순간의 사회정치적 역학 관계에 의해서 결정되는 것이라고 주장하며 현재 중국 등의 트랜스미디어 공간은 상업주의, 소비주의에 크게 지배당하고 있다고 진단한다.

Key Words: Transmedia, Mobility, Contemplative Collective, Machinima, MMORPGs, ScreenSpace, Tactile Experience, Responsive Environment, Augmented Space, Expo

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