Built Heritage

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Making history, making place—contextualising the built heritage of world expos 2010 and 2015

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Abstract

Be it the 1873 World's Fair in Vienna, which established the city's status as a link between the Occident and Orient, or the very first Great Exhibition in 1851 in London, which showcased the then British empire to a global public and the world to its domestic visitors. World's fairs have been and are still an indispensable part of a shared human history as well as an indicator of a country's economic and cultural relevance on a global scale. They are undoubtedly politically motivated drivers of collective memories and, in turn, nation-building processes. This is why they are not only publicly discussed and thoroughly documented in archives but also often manifested in buildings that long outlast these events and themes but continue to tell their tales.

This article elaborates on the ways in which world's fairs (or expos) have been used as catalysts to develop cities and how they themselves – though ephemeral phenomena – ultimately found their way into urban landscapes and historiography. Moreover, based on his own empirical studies on the last two expos of Shanghai (2010) and Milan (2015), the author elaborates on the placemaking procedures that precede and follow these mega-events, reflecting on the ensuing public discourse to (de)legitimate them, its limitations, and effects on the urban legacy of the aforementioned expos. He then presents an overarching discussion on their built heritage.

Keywords Built heritage, Expo, World's fair, Shanghai, Milan, Discourse, Ethnography, Urban

1 Introduction

World's fairs or expos[1] have always had an important function for the nations that host them, although the key reasons for their conduct may vary. Often considered 'friendly competition' (Jones and Ponzini 2018, 443) between nations, they help not only promote 'technological innovations' (ibid.) to an international audience but also – increasingly – the 'urban development' and 'regeneration' of the locale (Evans 2019, 6). At their earliest instances, the focus often lay on the self-representation of host-nations, who intended to use such fairs to demonstrate their own legitimacy domestically while underlining their political importance internationally (Benedict 1991; Greenhalgh 2011). The Paris fairs, known as *Expositions Universelles,* of the nineteenth century were evidence of this, as they all followed the principle of being larger and better than the last, all the while being historical landmarks (Roche 2003). In 1900, they culminated in a proud showcase of the third French Republic (Marsh 2002). Currently, architectural masterpieces such as the Paris Eiffel Tower, the Musée d'Orsay[2]

[1] These mega events have used various names, such as *International Exhibition*, *Exposition Universelle*, *World's Fair*, or Expo. The latter two designations are most commonly used and are used in this article.

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[2] Which served Paris as a train station, known as 'Gare d'Orsay', until 1939 and was inaugurated as a museum in 1986.

and the Grand Palais serve as reminders of these increasingly massive world's fairs (Geppert 2002). However, other nations also came to the scene and followed the prevailing trend of self-portrayal on a global stage. The Vienna World's Fair of 1873, a representative of the multiethnic state and link between the West and the East, remains unforgotten from the nineteenth century and it needs to be understood as a prerequisite to the city's present-day image, as it initiated urban and infrastructural projects such as the university, city hall and parliament (Roschitz 1873). Another equally famous and historically important example is the World's Colombian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, which turned out to be the first indicator of the industrial and political might of the USA, pointing to its eventual rise to a world power within the next century (Smith et al. 2011). Undoubtedly, the first 50 years of the world's fairs made it clear that there was not only great enthusiasm surrounding them but also the need for a supervisory body, which would regulate the awarding to interested nations as an independent entity, so in 1928, the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), located in Paris, was founded by then 31 nation-states (Kalb 1994).

Until the end of World War II, world's fairs set the stage for 'exercises in nationalism' (Benedict 1991) among participating and host countries, most prominently illustrated by an architectural stand-off between the Soviet and Nazi Pavilions during an *exposition specialisée*[3] in Paris 1937 (Kargon et al. 2015). The postwar twentieth century saw the rise and participation of multinational corporations (MNCs) that wanted to position themselves prominently alongside countries on a global stage, offering the audiences their respective solutions to humanity's existing and future –problems in the spirit of corporate social –responsibility while also relying on nation branding to market their products (Björner and Berg 2012; Smits and Jansen 2012; Harvey 2013; Benedict 1991). Hence, the name 'expo', which applies to all kinds of trade exhibitions but is not as large as the world's fair that arose and may – anthropologically speaking – be considered to refer to 'a series of mammoth rituals in which all sorts of power relations, both existing and wished for, are being expressed' (Benedict and Dobkin 1983, 6). Lasting only for several months, they beg the question of what remains of them after they conclude.

[3] 'Specialized expos' refer to smaller world's fairs that take place between their large counterparts (Bureau International des Expositions 2023).

The intellectual legacy[4] of expos is attributable to the discourse that has evolved around them and spans media as well as various disciplines, such as architecture (Klingmann 2010; Liu and Chu 2011), urban planning (Deng et al. 2016; Deng and Poon 2012), history (Bosbach and Davis 2002; Geppert 2002; Ganz 2012), political science (Denton 2017; Cull 2012), ethnology (Färber 2006; Harvey 2013; Houdart 2012; Brownell 2013; Benedict 2002; 1991), economy (Tran 2016; Perotti 2014) communication and media studies (Björner and Berg 2012; Chen 2012; Dynon 2011) and even archaeology (Gardner 2018; 2020).

Their material legacy,[5] on the other hand, which shall be emphasised in this article, is inextricably tied to the field of architecture, as the famed structures of the world's fairs above all else 'stand out' during and after these events (Den Hartog 2021; Gardner 2018; Clayton 2007). In the ensuing discussions of built heritage, its definition and dissemination appear central for our understanding of the material legacy of expos. This is congruent with general debates within anthropology, which has progressively moved away from the sole descriptive study of human beings (Geertz 2019; Gupta and Ferguson 2001) and their interactions, choosing to 'follow ideas, metaphors, narratives' or 'things' (Marcus 1995), and in a wide range of interdisciplinary approaches that include architectural and urban heritage studies, which have been moving away from their own 'object-centred orthodoxy' that had them 'confined to the visible realm' (González Martínez 2017, 14) until the second half of the twentieth century. Since then, a range of approaches have focused on, e.g., caring and valuing (Harrison 2015), sustainability (Den Hartog 2021; Gaffney 2013), gentrification (Arkaraprasertkul 2018; Chang 2017; Sun and Ye 2010),

[4] This article uses the terms 'legacy' and 'heritage' regarding expos to refer to what remains of these events. Based on their use in corresponding literature, a potential 'legacy' is often ascribed to these events while they are still taking place, e.g., in the form of an 'intellectual legacy' being established via conferences and publications (Milan Charta 2015; Veca 2015) or buildings that are predestined to serve on as carriers of the expos' themes and ideals. Legacies can be perceived both negatively and positively. 'Heritage' on the other hand, encompasses traditions, customs, languages, beliefs, artefacts, and landmarks and herein is used as a more neutral term highlighting broader aspects of collective cultural identity and history.

[5] Reference is made here explicitly to the 'material legacy' of world's fairs, as this terminology extends beyond 'landscapes, architecture, and built heritage' (Law 2023, 2). This tangible heritage of expos, e.g., artworks artefacts, souvenirs, tools, and inventions, are commonly found in museums, as many inventions have found usage in our daily lives. During the first world's fair, inventions such as the telegraph and steam powered machines, were introduced to the global public (Bosbach and Davis 2002).

wellbeing (Sektani et al. 2023) and identity[6] (Zhong and Chen 2017; Den Hartog 2017), have contributed to the overarching debates on built heritage (González Martínez 2017; Harrison 2015). By juxtaposing them with current trends in the field of anthropology, new epistemological alleys might emerge for further exploration.

The present article begins its elaboration on the built heritage of expos by revisiting the first Great Exhibition in London, 1851, while moving on to other notable examples to be found within the nearly 200 years of expo conduct. This chapter discusses the translation of these ephemeral phenomena and their capacity to serve as catalysts for city development and national identities. Against this background, it then draws on two *discourse-ethnographic* (Keller 2011; 2003; Knoblauch 2001) case studies that were carried out by the author during Expo 2015 in Milan and from 2016 until 2017 on the former fairgrounds of Expo 2010 in Shanghai as part of his dissertation (Honisch 2019). Herein, recent studies on built heritage with respect to Shanghai (Chang 2017, 20; Lu and Li 2019; González Martínez 2021; L. Luo and Cao 2023) and Milan (Vita 2022; Ponzini 2022; Danna 2017) are consulted and discussed.

Built heritage is a complex of topics that has received extensive attention and treatment in Italy and China, which rank first and second on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the latter making continuous efforts to preserve 'physical infrastructure to produce a stable and durable collective memory while at the same time enhancing its legitimacy' (Mayer and Pawlik 2023, 155). Various authors have addressed questions of built heritage in the urban space of Shanghai and illustrate the interdependence of the city's built heritage with its first world's fair, e.g., regarding metro lines and stations (González Martínez 2023; González Martínez 2021), as well as the preservation of the Huangpu riverbank and its industrial heritage (L. Luo and Cao 2023; Den Hartog 2021; Y. Li and Zhong 2021; Deng and Poon 2012). The same is true for Milan Expo 2015, which faced criticism in its advent as well as aftermath regarding site selection, sustainability, neoliberal transformation and postevent use (Perotti 2014; Danna 2017; Offtopic 2015; Maggioni 2013) but has also been seen as a statistical success in terms of registered visitors (Basso and Di Vita 2018; Gatti 2018) and intellectual efforts to illustrate its tangible and intangible legacy (Gaeta and Vita 2021; Jones and Ponzini 2018; Di Vita 2020).

Hence, this article aims to build on these existing works by answering the following question: How does the conduct of world's fairs, exemplified by a comparison of the 2010 Shanghai and 2015 Milan Expos, shape urban development, public discourse, and built heritage?

2 The ephemeral fair and its imprint on the city

World's fairs are closely connected to the industrial developments of their time, as was originally evidenced by the first 'Great Exhibition' that took place in London in 1851 in front of an architectural backdrop that was undoubtedly imperial in nature (Greenhalgh 2011). Great Britain intended to position itself at the heart of the global community and did so by presenting its technological and economic developments to almost 6 million visitors (Marsh 2002; Kalb 1994). The Industrial Revolution, which began in the mid-eighteenth century, alongside the successes of its overseas imperialism compelled the flourishing empire to showcase its wealth, dominions, and civilisational prowess to an international audience (Bosbach and Davis 2002). The recent invention of locomotives and a network of train connections further helped bring both people and exhibits to London's Hyde Park (Osterhammel 2002). Here, the Crystal Palace,[7] arguably 'the most impressive display of the advanced state of British industry' (Yanni 2002, 120), envisioned and built by Joseph Paxton (Gardner 2018; Clayton 2007), hosted the event.

Due to its size and appeal, this first world's fair was able to attract both supporters and critics, amongst whom the retrospectively most prominent was inarguably a young journalist named Karl Marx, who was then residing in London and publicly scrutinised such a 'pantheon of the bourgeoisie' (Marx and Engels 1978, 500) via pamphlets, while the British Crown had a rather positive attitude towards the event, as it had actively initiated it. Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria and the chair of the Royal Commission that organised the event (Bennett 2002), even invoked 'a period of most wonderful transition' and the 'unity of mankind' (Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha 1877, 201) by bringing together industrialists, inventors, producers of goods, investors, and potential consumers in one place (Lehmkuhl and Schmidt 2005; Benedict 2002; Davis 2002). Hence, unsurprisingly, the success of the 'Great Exhibition' further led to economic agreements, tariff cuts and deregulation policies, in both national and transnational terms (Davis 2002).

[6] 'As the 2010 World Expo approached, the urgency to highlight local identity accelerated the pace of heritage conservation' (Zhong and Chen 2017, 85), e.g., regarding Shanghai's Shikumen houses (Zhong and Chen 2017; Den Hartog 2017).

[7] It encompassed a length of 600 m (Osterhammel 2002) and 92,000 m^2 of exhibition space, hosting 13,000 exhibits (Gardner 2018).

Fig. 1 Souvenir shop in Paris near the Eiffel Tower (Source: the author)

After the Great Exhibition ended on 15th October 1851, the Crystal Palace—although disassembled and rebuilt at the rather peripheral Sydenham Hill—continued to serve the Londoners as a venue for other events, such as football games and trade fairs (Kay 2008; Kalb 1994), as well as 'scientific congresses, concerts, political gatherings, consumer shows, fireworks display' (Gardner 2018, 193) and much more, in the decades to come. Hence, it can be said that the Crystal Palace shaped the image of the city and the identity (Benedict 1991) of its people even long after its first world's fair.

After serving as a venue and landmark for London for almost a century, the imperial structure tragically burned down on the night of November 30, 1936 (Schoenefeldt 2011). With that, it shared a fate with other benchmark buildings of later world's fairs, most notably the 'Rotunde' of the Vienna World's Fair in 1873 (Roschitz 1873) and the 'Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building' (Burg 2015) of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago twenty years later. By that point, however, the legacies of the world's first 'Great Exhibition', as well as that of the Crystal Palace, were undoubtedly set in stone, not least because both the event and its landmark had a lasting architectural influence and imperialist impact on subsequent world's fairs (Yanni 2002).

The ephemeral nature of any world's fair begs the question of what ultimately remains of such events, particularly since vast quantities of space and money, predominantly public,[8] are allocated to host them and they are subsequently often exposed to disapproval and protests, especially in the local domestic context (Danna 2017; Cull 2012; Lockyer 2007). In this regard, the influence that world's fairs can have on 'the future' of our world becomes central (Gardner 2020), given that this question is an integral part of their thematic layout.[9] However, the most immediate effect of world's fairs can be found within the locale in the form of changes to the urban space, either directly or indirectly attributed to their conduct. Notable examples of such a 'direct expression' include the Eiffel Tower of the Paris Fair in 1889, the Brussel Atomium of EXPO'58 (Winter 2013), and the China Art Museum in Shanghai, which served as the National Pavilion for Expo 2010 (Deng 2013). Like many other buildings from past world's fairs, these structures have survived and found new purposes, serving as souvenirs and tourist attractions (Fig. 1), posing a 'return on investment' even decades later (Winter 2015, 20; L. Yu et al. 2012) while simultaneously embodying domestic narratives of shared nationhood (Benedict 1991). Furthermore, large-scale rezonings and infrastructure projects might also be understood as a direct result of world exhibitions (L. Luo and Cao 2023; Den Hartog 2021; Danna 2017; Roche 2003), as concrete plans for the continued use of fairgrounds ideally exist prior to these mega-events being held (Houdart 2013). A good example in this regard is the Expo Commemoration Park in Osaka, which ensured the sustainable use of the 1970 World's Fair site while maintaining positive memories of the event (Anderson and Shimizu 2007). In addition to its many recreational attractions, the National Museum of Ethnology, which contains artefacts from other countries and cultures that came into Japan's possession not

[8] The degree to which expos are financed through public and private sources vary, as do their sites (Greenhalgh 2011; Roche 2003; Harvey 2013).

[9] Not least illustrated by slogans such as 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future' (Dubai 2020) 'Progress and Harmony for Mankind' (Osaka 1970), and 'The Age of Discovery" (Seville 1992).

least through official donations by other nations during the Osaka Expo 1970, is on the same site.

Large-scale infrastructure projects are also often part of the expo conduct, primarily to give as many people as possible the opportunity to take part in the event (Evans 2019). The first world exhibition, which was built on a relatively new train network at the time, demonstrated that good (public) connections are essential for the transport of the masses to these events. Having said that, a world's fair might serve as a catalyst for any number of projects, as – often but not always[10] – large urban areas need to be repurposed to host them, as was, e.g., the case for Shanghai 2010 (Sun and Ye 2010) and for New York 1939 (Gardner 2020). Placemaking and repurposing prior to and after such mega-events are largely tantamount to their perceived success and legacies, as the two empirical cases within this article will illustrate. Furthermore, the built heritage of the world's fairs in question will be examined and contrasted in two ways: the repurposing of existing areas and buildings, for example, existing and disused industrial facilities, prior to and during the world's fair; and the repurposing of the expo site and its facilities following these events.

3 Comparing two expos (methods and theory)

The following two case studies are based on the author's research on Shanghai Expo 2010 and Milan Expo 2015. Having been to both expos and conducted follow-up research in Shanghai, 2016–17, and in Milan, 2018, he applied a discourse-ethnographic approach (Wu and Hou 2015; Keller 2011) to his research based on data derived from participant observation, qualitative stakeholder interviews, and corresponding texts and media.

Ethnographic analysis of world's fairs has already been conducted; examples can be found, e.g., in the works of Färber (2006), whose research focused on the modes of knowledge produced during the Hanover Expo 2000; Harvey (2013), who took the guise of a journalist at Seville Expo 1992; and Houdart (2013), who based her ethnographic analysis on Aichi Expo 2005 primarily on visual and textual documents. A discourse-ethnographic approach to the expo study offers the possibility to build on and combine these varying approaches. Alongside the notions of Keller and others (Keller 2011, 2003; Wu and Hou 2015; Knoblauch 2001), such an approach focuses on contextualising and contrasting textual data with those derived from an author's own field work. Being based on Foucault's discourse theory, it raises questions such as *'Who is legitimized to speak and where?' or 'What might/can be said and how?'* (Keller 2011, 67), which allows for a given research field to be assessed based on its inherent power structures, questioning modes, strategies and terms of discourse (re)production (Foucault 1988, 48ff; Keller 2011, 47f). This fits the study of expos in thus far as Roche notes, '*urban mega-events are typically conceived and produced by powerful elite groups with little democratic input to the policy making process by local citizens*' (Roche 2000, 126).

In addition, the author based his epistemological approach on Aleida Assmann's theories on 'cultural memory', which she notes is preceded by the 'communicative memory' of contemporary witnesses who, during their lifetime, can shape the public perception of given events as well as challenge it before it eventually becomes 'cultural memory', meaning history (Assmann 1999, 12ff; 137f). Furthermore, he drew on the methodology of Multisited Ethnography, which suggests following not only 'people' but also 'narratives' and 'metaphors' (Marcus 1995, 108–9) within anthropological research, providing an ethnographic framework that allows discourse relevant elements such as the built heritage of Expos 2010 and 2015 to be retraced even years after their conduct within the hosting cities, as well as for the juxtaposition of his two case studies (ibid., 105). The applied theories and methods herein in line with the authors' hypothesis for this article, namely, that both the tangible and intangible legacies of all mega-events work asynchronously, insofar as they are already being constituted during the events – or even the planning phase – well into the ways expos are subsequently (re)narrated and insofar as both are established and challenged within a continuing process of de/legitimisation orchestrated by their various stakeholders (Honisch 2019).

As discourse ethnographies go 'beyond the analysis of documents […] by analysing discourses based on data that has been collected through participant observation and interviewing' (Elliker et al. 2017, 237; Wu and Hou 2015), they also account for the spatial and temporal dynamics of the field. One example is Huffschmid and Wilder's (2009) discourse ethnography on an election campaign in Mexico that built on Lefebvre's triad of empirical engagement within the urban space: social interaction, materiality, and representation/discourse (Lefebvre 2013; 2003). They argued that built space is a result of power relations articulated within discourse, as the 'temporarily generated space' might be seen as a 'discursive effect' (Huffschmid and Wilder 2009, 5). Indeed, the study of built heritage is in many ways tied to discursive practices, as 'Heritage discourse generates not only conceptual but also material consequences: it shapes the way heritage is constructed, identified, interpreted, valued, conserved, managed and used' (Wu and Hou 2015, 41). Foucault termed such manifestations

[10] Some expos, such as the Hanover fair of 2000, temporarily used existing fairgrounds (Färber 2006).

and institutionalisations of discourse 'dispositifs' (Foucault 2000), subsequently hinting at the possibility, if not necessity, of assessing them in textual and physical realms.

The application of a discourse ethnography together with the epistemology of multisited ethnography allows for the comparison of not only two expos that differ in terms of their geopolitical context and the handling of domestic and international criticism of their conduct but also in terms of their research settings. While the research in Milan 2015 focused on the expo's actual conduct and ensuing discourse, the research in Shanghai 2016/17 examined how the Expo 2010 manifested itself within the cityscape and local memory six years after it was held. However, in both discourse ethnographies, the expo was priliminary, treated as a 'metaphor', alongside the principle of multisited ethnography (Marcus 1995, 108f) to constitute a field for research.

During research in Milan this meant that participant observation started in the Media Center of the expo, for which the author had received accreditation by the BIE, and from there extended across the entire fair site[11] but also offsite into the urban area of Milan and into online realms, most notably social media.[12] Given the vastness of communicated information, no claim to completeness can be made; rather, this procedure served to compare the types of statements and their occurrence on matters of the expo's eventual legacy/heritage, assessing public discourse. During personal interviews, the 'constitution, actualization and positioning against the discourse were then assessed accordingly' (Honisch 2019, 80; Keller 2011) to hypothesise on the ways and means this expo will eventually be remembered.

During the research in Shanghai, a field for research was constructed by finding and assessing the dispositifs of the former expo discourse, examining whether and to what extent institutions and stakeholders maintained certain narratives and memories about Expo 2010 over others and for what reasons. The methods used in this second research setting were qualitative interviews with stakeholders, who were either associated with the expo itself or with the post-expo site use and facilities, as well as locals, who visited the event themselves. Furthermore, he spanned his fieldwork onto institutions/buildings that were directly or indirectly related to the expo's conduct, most notably those on the former fairgrounds of Expo 2010, such as the China Art Museum, the Expo Axis or the Power Station of Art, as well as the Urban Planning Museum and the World Expo Museum, among many others.

In total, 21 interviews, 12 during Milan Expo 2015[13] and 9 on matters of the Shanghai Expo,[14] were gathered alongside commentary from Shanghainese pedestrians on matters of post-Expo site use during fieldwork in 2017. Furthermore, the author consulted textual documents, such as newspaper and online articles,[15] as well as the intellectual output of these expos, such as the Milan Charta and the Shanghai Manual (UN-Habitat, Bureau International des Expositions, and Shanghai Municipal People's Government 2022; Milan Charta 2015; Gatti 2018; Xinhua 2010), for analysis.

Comparing the built heritage of Expo 2010 and Expo 2015 against this background appears valuable, as the differing political, spatial and temporal contexts in which they were held arguably shaped both the groundwork and conduct of these events as well as the further use of the sites, their structures, corresponding infrastructure projects and research on them. Following in the footsteps of the author's previous discourse ethnographies, the subsequent case studies draw on his empirical findings,[16] as he reflects on the relevant literature published in the meantime.

4 The Shanghai case

Expo 2010, which took place from May 1st to October 31st, in Shanghai, was adorned with the slogan 'better city, better life', already hinting at its mission to further the city's own development before, during and after the event, or as Houdart (2012, 130) notes: 'The expo won't last, but in the Expo one can find embryonic pieces of a

[11] He visited approximately forty national pavilions aside from IGO/corporate pavilions, Cluster and thematic pavilions and partook in corresponding events, as well as conferences off- and onsite the event as a visitor during Expo 2015.

[12] Social media efforts of both expo organizers (Legrenzi and Mirti 2014) and the local grassroots opposition (Azzi and Colombo 2016) have been continuously tracked on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, allowing for a comparison of the positive and negative perceptions of this event.

[13] With executives of six nations, four corporations and one international governmental organization participating in the event, as well as two interviews with members of an expo opposing grassroots movement.

[14] With the former architect of the Brazilian Pavilion of Expo 2010, a Professor of Architecture at Tongji University, a former curator of the China Art Museum, a policy advisor to the Pudong Urban Planning & Design Institute as well as current Shanghai residents who visited Expo 2010.

[15] Domestic media included Xinhua, China Daily (J. Li 2011; Wang and Qu 2007), Global Times (Zang 2012) regarding Expo 2010, Corriere della Sera (Ferrarella 2012), La Repubblica (Gallione, Carra, and Liso 2015), Il Giorno (Lana 2019) for Expo 2015, as well as international media such as Reuters (Scherer and Mackenzie 2015; Parodi 2014), the New York Times (Donadio 2015; Barboza 2010), amongst others. Furthermore, grassroots blogs and media run by local adversaries to Expo 2015 were consulted (Offtopic 2015; Maggioni 2013).

[16] The gathered data and their analysis are predominantly to be found within the corresponding thesis of the author (Honisch 2019) and are for the most part referenced in the present article only to create space for the juxtaposition with more recent publications.

Shanghai to come (roads, infrastructure, and buildings)'. As the largest of its kind to date, with 73 million visitors (4.2 million of them foreigners) (Yu et al. 2012) and a budget of 28.6 billion yuan as well as an estimated 80 billion yuan in tourism revenue (Lee et al. 2013), it also proved to be an economic factor for the state and region, firmly positioning the city on the Huangpu River on the world map as a global centre (Sun and Ye 2010). Moreover, since the world's public and, likewise, many domestic Chinese people could not visit the event, they only received a media-supported image of this world exhibition (Xue et al. 2012, 748; J. Li 2011; Wang and Qu 2007).

Together with the Guangzhou Asian Games that took place the same year as the Shanghai Expo, as well as the Beijing Olympics, the PRC was determined to brand three of its largest cities both 'nationally as well as internationally' (Chen 2012, 732; Xinhua 2010). In the wake of these events, foreign social media was banned in 2009 (Bamman et al. 2012), exercising sizable control over what and how information was disseminated domestically while simultaneously bolstering its PR efforts with large media budgets[17] (Brownell 2013) that would 'improve legitimacy at home while countering China Threat rhetoric abroad' (Schneider 2013, 2). Studies have shown that the Chinese nonvisiting public relied primarily on domestic mass media as a source of information (Lee et al. 2013, 656; Xinhua 2010) to form a predominantly favourable perception of Expo 2010.

Despite these efforts, China's first world's fair struggled with image problems long before its conduct. The relocation of an estimated 18,000 households alongside the east shore of the Huangpu River south of the city centre, for the 5.82 km^2 large venue (Sun and Ye 2010) was viewed as unjustified by many people and sparked local unrest (Zhang 2018; Sun and Ye 2010). As part of the relocation efforts, inhabitants were offered residential units in the extended periphery of Shanghai, a compensation—some argue—was perceived positively (Wang and Qu 2007), while others argued otherwise (Zhang 2018; Cull 2012). Opinions about the reasons for hosting the expo varied; on the one hand, authors emphasised the urban remodulation of the Huangpu Riverbank[18] (K. Yu 2011; Deng and Poon 2012; Liu and Chu 2011); on the other hand, an experiment in city branding (Nordin 2012; Xue et al. 2012; L. Yu et al. 2012; Dynon 2011) or even a 'large-scale attempt at political communication'[19] (Schneider 2013, 3). Notably, the scientific and media discourse on Expo 2010 that had begun with the initial bid to host the event (Brownell 2013; Schneider 2013) continued until its end and beyond (Lee et al. 2013).

Shanghai's party secretary at the time, Yu Zhensheng, reassured the public early on that the main aim of holding the event was to improve the lives of the Shanghainese, and other leading members also expressed 'positive impacts on the Chinese peoples' attitude toward, perception of, and belief in the government and leadership, enhancing the "solidarity" between the peoples and the government' (Chen 2012, 733). In fact, it seemed that the Olympic Games in Beijing two years earlier had already attracted the majority of critical international media interest and that – at least from a political standpoint – the expo represented 'no story' in comparison (Brownell 2013, 79). However, due to its size and number of visitors, the expo itself could be regarded as both 'the medium' and 'the message' (Roche 2003) and, given its thematic setup, presented the possibility of being examined ethnographically as a quasi 'city within the city' (Houdart 2012, 133; Dynon 2011).

One such visual message that was intended to be received 'in person' was the Chinese national Pavilion, a magnificent red pagoda nicknamed the 'Eastern Crown' (东方之冠), which was planned and built by architect He Jingtang, rising 69 m in height. During the event, it quickly became the focus of attention, and with that 'discussion', it physically and visually stretched beyond those of the surrounding pavilions of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao. Building on the concept of 'harmony' (和谐), it arguably illustrated the 'importance of nation and collectivism' (Ye et al. 2012, 1088). However, some authors do not resonate with this notion, seeing it as marginalising and nationalistic and stylising the PRC as the 'world leader', not only in domestic but also in global terms (Nordin 2012).

Thirteen years later, even bigger skyrises decorate the former expo site and its surroundings, where one can find both street names and buildings that are at least linguistically reminiscent of the mega-event, such as the Expo Park (世博公园), the Expo Mall (世博源), and the World Expo Museum (世博会博物馆) (Fig. 2). However, the most prominent remnant of the Expo 2010, the 'China Art Museum' (中华艺术宫), still visually stands out today and will continue to do so (Fig. 3). It arguably serves as the most tangible *dispositif* (Foucault 2000), a material memory of the World Exhibition and a reminder that its

[17] Indication of this was 'a massive investment of US$6 billion dollars to strengthen its foreign communications capacity' (Brownell 2013, 66) made by the PRC in the wake of the Beijing Olympics.

[18] This argument has also been made by some of the author's interviewees [L. Lang (anonymized), professor for architecture, interviewed on 20.4.2017 by the author; X. Luo, policy advisor to the Pudong Urban Planning & Design Institute, interviewed on 9.15.2017 by the author].

[19] Sparking familiarity with the famed nineteenth century expositions. As London 1851 (Bennett 2002), Chicago 1893 (Smith, Vendl, and Vendl 2011), and the Paris fair of 1855 (Marsh 2002) all followed a political impetus to underline their nation's supposed superiority in front of a global audience.

Fig. 2 Street signs on the grounds of the former expo 'chin.: shibo' (Source: the author)

Fig. 3 China Art Museum (left) and Houtan Expo Park (right) (Source: the author)

promise of a better and more liveable city has become realised in the meantime.

Upon entry—among the works of contemporary and traditional Chinese artists and an undoubtedly rich palette of various styles—one also encounters a series of visual representations of Shanghai's cityscape. In fact, towards the end of the museum is an exhibition entitled '上海历史文脉美术创作工程成果展' (engl.: 'Shanghai Historical Context Art Creation Project Achievements Exhibition'). It illustrates an eye-catching chronology from the city's beginnings as a fishing village to a former colonial city to the postopening economic metropolis it has since become in the wake of the PRC's opening-up policies initiated by former chairperson Deng Xiaoping. He himself is depicted sitting patiently in front of the Pearl Tower in Lujiazui, right next to a picture of the Nanpu Bridge. The utilitarian craftsmanship of Communist China is further embodied by the artistic visualisation of the city's expressway network, its airport, streets and bridges, serving the role of showcasing the communal achievements of party and people. Last but not least, the expos own built heritage finds itself immortalised with a drawing of the 'Expo Axis', now 'Expo Mall', and China Pavilion, now home to this exhibition.

Different utterances of the postexpo discourse (Marcus 1995; Foucault 2021) are found within Shanghai's city proper. The city planning museum, where in addition to being a commemorative plaque, a downscaled model of the expo site as well as a topography of the cityscape, 'before and after the event', narratively stylises the event to an epitome for Shanghai's progress. Additionally, at the former hosting site, the World Expo Museum, which opened in 2017 as the only of its kind, authorised by the BIE, continues this narrative, prominently positioning China's first world's fair as the main attraction within the history and models of 150 years of previous event history.

Recounting the statistical success of this young century, never before have so many people visited a world's fair that had accounted for so much space and so many participating nations (Sun and Ye 2010; Smits and Jansen 2012). It is reasonable to assume that there will not be another one of this size for a very long time. An event that could not have been implemented without the many Chinese workers, volunteers and visitors, who did not go unmentioned within this exhibition. These domestic Chinese people can relish the country's achievements and indulge in a collective national identity (Assmann 1999) as a form of 'red tourism'[20] (Denton 2017, 219).

Nevertheless, the urban development changes that were implemented through the world's fair and beyond appear remarkable even at first glance. Shanghai now boasts one of the longest subway networks worldwide, with 17 lines, 705 square kilometres of line and 413 stations,[21] which is largely attributable to the city's expo conduct (González Martínez 2021), or as one interview partner put it, 'it galvanized a lot of things slightly, the map, the metro system' (C. Shallis, Shanghai resident and urban researcher, interviewed on May 12, 2017 by the author). The Huangpu Riverfront has also been renovated in line with the event's theme, and ecologically sustainable park projects have been implemented from the industrial sections (Den Hartog 2021; K. Yu 2011), in which only scattered individual features of the former industry, which are astutely located, still remind the pedestrians of the original purpose of the area (Den Hartog 2021; Liu and Chu 2011) (Fig. 3). The renovation of the port industrial facilities in the Huangpu River basin was intended, on the one hand, to provide extensive public parks for the Shanghainese and examples of urban best practices to attract international artists and artisan industry, among others (Den Hartog 2021). The repurposing of such former industrial areas affected not only the former expo site but also other parts of the Huangpu River (L. Luo and Cao 2023), with the expo certainly being a catalyst for this restructuring of the inner city (Den Hartog 2017).

A positive example of the revaluation of the cultural heritage at the former site is the expo's 'Pavilion of the Future', originally built in 1897 under the Qing Dynasty as an energy power plant; it would continue to host the Shanghai Biennale as the 'Power Station of Art' and has since become a cultural attraction in the city, merging industrial heritage with the built heritage of the expo (Honisch 2019). Another case that could have served as a positive example was the Tengtou Pavilion, which was already part of the 'Urban Best Practice Area' during the expo, but—although it was made of reused materials—was ultimately demolished in the aftermath (Den Hartog 2017). From the outset, the Shanghai World Expo Coordination Bureau envisaged postexpo site use as a 'service-oriented sub center' for conventions, commerce, exhibitions, entertainment and tourism (Deng and Poon 2012). 'As a branding installation, the site's green spaces, its ecologically sustainable structures and its cultural embellishments constitute the exemplary heart of the harmonious city' (Dynon 2011, 190), while the industry has been moved elsewhere, e.g., the shipyard to Changxing Island (Sze 2015). Indeed, the expo's conduct posed a welcomed opportunity for the government to claim large land strips within Shanghai's inner city for the purpose of recommodifying it after the event and to forgo the preexisting 'fragmented authority over actual land ownership' (Zhang 2018, 9). This factor was also alluded to by one of the author's interview partners and Professor for Architecture at Tongji University, who stated:

'All these companies, they are occupying big places […] you cannot move them. You cannot buy them because they know the value. In this political reason or taking this good political opportunity, the Shanghai government sent application to the central government saying, 'We are going to use the expo area, this area for expo. Please, would you give the land back to us so we can bring the Expo here?' Then, there was the central government decision to move out' [L. Lang (anonymized), professor for architecture, interviewed on April 20, 2017 by the author].

In the meantime, the former industrial structures alongside the Huangpu have been attributed new purposes, e.g., museums and event venues,[22] serving as carriers of memories of what Shanghai was and has since become (Luo and Cao 2023).

Expos have tangible and intangible effects (Ponzini 2022), which also applies to the one in Shanghai. While its material legacy is evident, as the old port industries to both sides of the Huangpu riverbank south of Lijiazui gave way to malls, parks, museums, and other cultural and creative venues, the author's interviewees in 2016/2017 suggest that it also sparked a trend to learn English among the Shanghainese and furthered their self-perception as global citizens (Honisch 2019). The built heritage of China's first world's fair intently prolongs the tale of the greatest event of all time, in terms of both the structures preserved and—in some cases—the exhibitions they host (Denton 2017). It needs to be noted that local voices that

[20] Which can be described as a form of 'patriotic education'(Denton 2017, 219) that is meant to evoke and instil notions of collectivism and national identity centred on the PRC's history and achievements (ibid. 2017).

[21] These numbers are from the year 2021 (González Martínez 2021).

[22] For a more extensive list of former industrial sites alongside the Huangpu that have been turned into museums within the last ten years refer to Luo and Cao's work on 'Shanghai's waterfront industrial heritage' (L. Luo and Cao 2023).

might stand against this positive connotation of Expo 2010 and its built heritage are predominantly nonparticipants within this discourse, neither are the displacees who had given way to the expo conduct[23] (Zhang 2018) and were dismissive of interview requests by the author during his research in Shanghai. At least in terms of sheer scale, Expo 2010 stands second to none, which also explains why many of the expo's architects have in the meantime settled in the city and found their way into the tertiary education system to inspire future generations of aspiring architects. One of them was the architect of the Brazilian pavilion to Expo 2010,[24] who summarised Shanghai's expo conduct fittingly as follows: 'they put the Expo inside the city. Inside the grid of the city. Then after the Expo was usable for the city' (F. Brenao, architect of the 2010 Brazilian Pavilion, interviewd on April 4, 2017 by the author).

5 The Milan case

For the Shanghai Expo, public protest was hardly noticeable, at least in the domestic media discourse, but this was much different at the ensuing expo in Milan, 2015. The intentionally broad theme of the expo motto 'Feeding the planet, energy for life' invited not only countries but also inter-governmental organisations (IGOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international companies to address global problems such as famine and water scarcity, working and presenting their own solutions, and—often under the curtain of nation branding (Harvey 2013)—offered the opportunity for extensive product placement. In particular, the increasing presence of MNCs, which are regularly viewed as part of the problem rather than as a solution (e.g., regarding social equality and redistribution issues),[25] who had contributed financially to a 'seat at the table' at Expo Milan, inevitably attracted a large range of critics (Danna 2017; Maggioni 2013).

One major point of criticism in the run-up to the event was its location on the northwestern outskirts of Milan in the municipality of Rho, where an extensive strip of agricultural land, approximately 100 hectares (Gaeta and Vita 2021), was chosen for the conduct of the world's fair. It should be noted, however, that – though nominally farmland – the area was in fact 'abandoned, scattered with illegal dumps, scrubland, and dirt roads' (Danna 2017, 910).

Furthermore, arguably concrete ideas for the subsequent use of the area that were presented along with the successful bid for the event in 2007 proved difficult to implement in time (Di Vita 2020). This was in part attributable to a stalemate between the local and regional governments, who became divided on the terms of the site-lease and postexpo use (Gaeta and Vita 2021); furthermore, the global financial crisis in 2008 brought about a decrease in the initial public investment from 4.1 billion to 1.486 billion EURO (Danna 2017). This caused significant delays in construction, which started only in 2011, four years later.

When construction finally started, there was not much that could be used structurally for the purpose of hosting the mega-event; the land had just been repurposed from agricultural to nonagricultural use (Gaeta and Vita 2021), meaning that the majority of the buildings, as well as the corresponding infrastructure on the site, had to be created 'from scratch' (Danna 2017, 911). These issues combined inevitably stirred public headwinds, as 'sustainability' was among the main themes of this expo, which also marketed itself as a sustainable event (Gatti 2018), pointing to many of its pavilions being only of a temporary nature (Danna 2017).[26]

A notable exception is the Cascina Triulza, a former farm where charitable events had taken place (Gaeta and Vita 2021) prior to the expo. During the event, these facilities would then be dedicated to the Civil Society hosting 200 organisations that included social, cultural and environmental associations and much more (Gatti 2018). After the event, it eventually became the headquarters of the specially created Arexpo S.p.A., responsible for the postevent strategies and their implementation (Di Vita 2020) for the Cascina Triulza to continue to serve its role as built heritage. In 2017, the company initiated an auction 'to lease the land and select a developer for the post-event redevelopment' (Gaeta and Vita 2021, 8) while preserving well-known expo structures such as the Cascina, the tree of life, the Italian pavilion and the canal circumventing the site.

Undoubtedly not everything had gone according to plan in the advent and aftermath of Expo 2015. One year before its conduct, Roberto Perotti, an Italian macroeconomist and professor at Milan's prestigious Bocconi

[23] Largescale displacements had surfaced in the wake of the Beijing Olympics as well, but this was also outside the Chinese realm, e.g. in Seoul 1988 (Shin 2009).

[24] Who had commenced teaching and opened an office at a newly founded Design Department at Songjiang University.

[25] The involvement of MNCs was also repeatedly criticized by the authors interviewees outside the expo, who took a critical stance towards the event (Honisch 2019, 166); as one argued, 'It would be stupid to think that the multinationals and the countries see themselves making a tourism-fair and solving the problems of the world' (Abo, Milanese urban activist and member of the NOEXPO movement, interviewed on September 20, 2015 by the author).

[26] In fact, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has meanwhile pushed for this trend to extend working with 'smaller budgets, temporary structures and the re-use of pre-existing infrastructures' (Ponzini 2022, 428; Jones, Di Vita, and Ponzini 2022).

University, argued that two main problems arose from the expo conduct: 1) corruption would necessarily play a significant part in its initiation and conduct and 2) there would be significant delays, as several political authorities, the city of Milan, its municipality, as well as the Lombardy region and the Italian state, were involved in the project's planning and follow-through (Perotti 2014; Danna 2017). With the expo conduct surmounting to approximately 14 billion Euro in public spending, questions arose about whether all of this money was used for the intended purposes (Perotti 2014), especially since rumours of supposed Mafia involvement in the awarding of contract tenders surfaced occasionally (Maggioni 2013; Danna 2017). In domestic media reports on the event (Milanotoday 2015; Parodi 2014; Ferrarella 2012), the arrest of managers and ex-members of parliament involved in public tenders surrounding the construction led many to believe that the 'scandal surrounding the Universal Exposition, which has been in the planning and construction stages for more than six years and is expected to draw millions of visitors next year, was another example of Italy's inability to keep corruption out of major events' (Parodi 2014).

While land acquisition had a cost of 120 million (arguably ten times more than its book value), site construction accounted for 1.3 billion Euro and expenditures of 940 million during the event phase, leaving the better part of approximately 10 billion Euros to correlated infrastructural and mobility projects (Danna 2017). Many of these projects had repeatedly been objected to by the Milanese public, such as 158 km^2 of new highways and a canal project that connected the inner city with the expo site; others seemed more convenient, such as the extension of subway lines leading to the event (Danna 2017; Maggioni 2013).

Even before the expo was awarded to the Lombardy metropolis in 2007, local protests against its organisation had already formed, which generated an international following through grassroots activism and on social media using its own hashtag, #NOEXPO, and steadily increased as the mega-event neared its conduct (Honisch 2019; Danna 2017; Maggioni 2013; Offtopic 2015). As protestors also took to the streets regularly to demonstrate against the event, they made their presence felt visually as well, as Milan's cityscape was soon plastered by corresponding 'NOEXPO' Graffiti (Fig. 4), their own publications, posters and pamphlets. As they not least regarded the expo as an epitome of the neoliberal transformation of Milan's city proper, as one interviewee explained, 'Why EXPO? Because EXPO is the key, not only the event to be challenged but the key to interpret how Milan is changing, what Milan will be like in 2016 because it is a problem to continue promoting great events and major operations in our territory' (Abo, Milanese urban activist and member of the NOEXPO movement, interviewed on 20.9.2015 by the author).

Termed an 'evento fallito' (Offtopic 2015) by its critics, the mega-event had its work cut out for it – at least regarding the public and media perception. Hence, it was surprising to many if not most that the expo turned out to be an enormous success. A total of 21.5 million visitors (more than anticipated) and a 'net profit of 23 million euros' (Basso and Di Vita 2018, 51) propelled the event and its public image to not only being well received but also as leaving a legacy of its own in terms of city branding (Jones et al. 2022). In fact, the expo's success even helped Expo S.p.A. CEO Giuseppe Sala become an elected mayor of Milan in 2016 (Danna 2017) and thereafter support his next successful bid for a mega-event, the Milano-Cortina Olympic Games of 2026 (Jones et al.

Fig. 4 NO EXPO graffiti on a Milanese street (Source: the author)

2022, 20). During the six-month lifespan of Expo 2015, it became evident that it was the first of its kind in the long history of world's fairs that built its success primarily on social media, thereby not only promoting the global discourse on its main themes—crisis management in terms of the sustainability of food, energy and the environment (Milan Charta 2015)—but also on itself and the city of Milan (Gatti 2018).

It did so in stark contrast to its local opposition, which until the official start of the event had been at the forefront of using social media because of its advantage in publicly scrutinising the event and its organisers. Their cause diminished on May 1, 2015, the day of the opening of the World Exhibition, when 10,000 peaceful protestors demonstrated against the expo and were joined by a few hundred Black Bloc members, who broke shop windows and set cars on fire (Danna 2017). From thereon, it was the protest movement that found itself in the crossfire of criticism and whose hashtag #NOEXPO acquired a negative connotation overnight (Honisch 2019).[27]

The expo organisation responded to these occurrences with silence and its own expo-affirming social media campaigns. Starting as early as January 2014, a team of approximately 20 people was assigned the task of engaging the public on '*a local and global scale generating and multiplying hype' with an 'integrated strategy of visual storytelling, designed to generate empathy and strengthen its reach, optimizing results in terms of visibility and engagement'* (Legrenzi and Mirti 2014). With a 360° approach to media, Expo 2015 built not only on its own PR efforts but also on multipliers such as its participants, famous 'Expo Ambassadors' such as Gianluigi Buffon and Ornella Muti, as well as journalists and visitors who shared and disseminated the expo posts and pictures (Gatti 2018). Although the criticism from outside never ceased completely, it was hardly noticeable anymore, in contrast to the masses of online content that the expo accounted for, indicating 678,000 Twitter, 287,000 Instagram and 18,000 YouTube followers as well as 1.8 million Facebook likes at the end of its six-month duration (Gatti 2018, 275).

Aiding these digital campaigns, the Milan Municipal Administration and Chamber of Commerce made use of their own existing built heritage to spread the word about the expo. This program, entitled EXPOinCittà, focused predominantly on tourist destinations in the city and region to promote the spectacle (Di Vita 2020). A total of 1015 locations hosted their own smaller yet related events to make both locals and tourists aware that the world had come to town, as EXPOinCittà accounted for 11 million visitors in its own right and upheld its name and memory (Jones et al. 2022).

It can be concluded that Milan furthered both its quest to stay a thriving international metropolis and local opposition with its expo conduct, as the mega-event brought about neoliberal changes to the city, most prominently to the expo site in Rho and its surroundings (Di Vita 2020; Ponzini 2022; Danna 2017; Offtopic 2015). The built heritage of the expo, which did not foot itself on preexisting structures, is planned to live on in the form of Milano's new Innovation District (MIND), where a campus for the Università degli Studi di Milano, the Galeazzi hospital, a range of entrepreneurs in cutting edge technological fields and other private firms will reside (Di Vita 2020). How this part of Milan develops will also determine whether the expo's own built heritage, e.g., the Cascina Triulza, Tree of Life, and expo canal, will serve as and constitute a positive legacy of the event. Having not yet been completed by the time this article was written, MIND had been termed a 'Siamese Project' of Expo 2015 (Gaeta and Vita 2021, 6), encountering similar shortcomings in terms of planning and implementing construction and facing delays due to problems with 'expropriation or lease' as well as 'change of governance arrangements' (ibid.). As MIND is intended to create a monument to the expo, it is arguably also of interest to Expo S.p.A. Since CEO Giuseppe Sala, now mayor of Milan, implicating a political impetus to its built heritage. The corresponding project of EXPOinCittá, a legacy in its own regard, brought resources to the built heritage within Milan's inner city as well as allowing for a reconnection with its outer rim (Ponzini 2022; Di Vita 2020), while the billions spent on infrastructural projects in the wake of expo as well as hundreds of millions for reclamation costs for the delayed construction at the former site will still have to prove their return on investment in the years to come.

6 Conclusions

All mega-events are media in their own right (Roche 2003); this is particularly true for world's fairs, as their themes are discussed on a global platform over the course of six months. The previous sections have shown that the discourses (Foucault 2021) on world's fairs might differ but remain an important factor in the perception of their built heritage, which in turn serves as a manifestation of the collective memories of the event itself (Assmann 1999) and either helps or contradicts city branding (Gaeta and Vita 2021; L. Yu et al. 2012; Färber 2006). While it was the British Royals[28] at the Great Exhibition in London, it

[27] In a project analysing approximately 500,000 expo-related tweets from May 1st, 2015, two researchers from Politecnico di Milano came to the conclusion that only a small number of unfavourable photos, i.e., of a burning car and masked protester 'occupied the visual space of the day on both sides (the official and the [un]official), marginalising the issues raised by the protesters' (Azzi and Colombo 2016) in the process.

[28] Namely the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 presided by Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha and inventor Henry Cole as its chief administrator (Hobhouse 2004).

was the Communist Party in Shanghai and multinational corporations in Milan that used the conduct of these mega-events to strengthen their legitimacy in both the global and the local context. What they left in terms of built heritage is – as history has shown (Greenhalgh 2011; Bosbach and Davis 2002) – also an indication of their perceived importance to the locale, as evidenced by buildings such as the Eiffel Tower, Crystal Palace, Brussels Atomium and the China Art Museum. Often, such expo-landmarks are indicative of positive memories of them. Having said that, opposing forces to any expo, be they local or global, off- or online, also feed into the ensuing discourses on its legitimacy from as early as with the successful bid to host such a mega-event all the way into debating its tangible and intangible legacy (Danna 2017; Cull 2012; Wheen 2001). Based on two discourse ethnographic case studies, the present article focused on bringing forth these voices and addressing the lack thereof, as they are directly interested in questions of infrastructural effects, sustainability, costs, urban transformation, postsite use and ultimately the built heritage of world's fairs.

The Shanghai Expo 2010 is special in this regard, as its theme 'better city, better life' is the embodiment of this discourse. The largest world exhibition of all time was realised with the premise of not so much having but being its own legacy, making use of the city's preexisting industrial heritage of the Huangpu Riverfront while creating a twenty-first century sequel to the nineteenth century Bund and twentieth century Lujiazui (Deng and Poon 2012). The commemoration of the expo itself, within structures that have either outlived the event and been repurposed (Den Hartog 2021), such as the China Art Museum or Power Station of Art, or been added to this site, such as the World Expo museum, illustrates commitment to both the expo's theme and its glory. The pragmatism that has brought this project to life has followed suit with the PRC's endeavours of old (its industrial heritage) and new (neoliberal transformation of the urban core). Notably, this perception is also seldom challenged. The former displacees of the expo site have been provided new homes in the city's periphery dislodged from the domestic media discourse, leaving only positive statements to be heard (Wang and Qu 2007; Zhang 2018; Foucault 2021). On the other hand, epitomes of the expo, such as the China Art Museum or the World Expo Museum, prolong the prevailing narrative of the greatest event of all time (Denton 2017), while the Shanghai Manual, a yearly report on urban best practices, serves as an intellectual legacy to Expo 2010 (UN-Habitat, Bureau International des Expositions, and Shanghai Municipal People's Government 2022).

The Milan Expo 2015, which struggled with political and economic problems and thus publicity from the very beginning (Danna 2017; Perotti 2014; Offtopic 2015), was able to leave a positive impression on its visitors and the public alike (Gatti 2018; Basso and Di Vita 2018), which will inevitably be reflected in the cityscape of Rho. With the EXPOinCittà concept, the city administration was able to incorporate and make use of and put resources to preexisting built heritage within the city and region (Jones et al. 2022), which allowed it to make up for what it initially had been scrutinised for in a positive way: a sustainable approach to mega-event conduct. On the other hand, the critical voices that the expo conduct brought forth and directly inspired in their enterprise for domestic integration still exist and remain committed to serving as a valuable corrective for Milan's urban development (Honisch 2019). The built heritage of this world exhibition will still be measured not only by the postevent use of the expo site but also by its further development and effect on the region. The focus here lies in the costly new infrastructure in the suburban area of Rho and the eventual realisation of the Milan Innovation District to carry on its built heritage.

The comparison of expos 2010 and 2015 illustrated similarities and differences in the ways the domestic public was approached during the expo conduct, as well as site repurposing after the event. The differing political circumstances arguably influenced the ways of public participation within discourse on these matters (Foucault 2021). While the reverberations of public protest were numerous in the case of Milan 2015, they were hardly noticeable in the case of Shanghai 2010. The same applies to postevent site use. Both expos relied on media-communicated images/ideas of the event, while Shanghai relied heavily on state-run media, Milan chose a full-scale approach to social media, both of which seemed to have furthered predominantly positive perceptions of these events. Differences appeared when assessing the built heritage of these mega-events. While Shanghai made use of preexisting industrial heritage to host its expo, Milan chose to repurpose untended land in the city's periphery. Both cities committed themselves to subsequently repurposing their former expo sites and utilised their conduct to implement large-scale urban infrastructure projects, such as highways and canals (Milan), subway lines and parks (Shanghai). While the Milanese efforts were met with local scrutiny, as were the ill-fated delays surrounding not only the expo's construction but also the repurposing phase, the eventual public support for the Milano-Cortina Olympic Games 2026 and the number of expo visitors stand in their favour. Time will tell whether the Milano Innovation District, embracing scale and parts of the expo, will do so as well. On the other hand, Shanghai followed through on its promise to *better the city* in terms of trademark buildings, recreational parks alongside the Huangpu River, and overall infrastructure.

Abbreviations

BIE	Bureau International des Expositions
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IGO	Inter-Governmental Organisation
PRC	People's Republic of China
MIND	Milano Innovation District
MNC	Multinational Corporation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
S.p.A	Società per Azioni (engl.: Joint-Stock Company)

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