Globalization and the production of city image in Guangzhou's metro station advertisements

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A B S T R A C T

The process of globalization has already become one of the dominant contexts in which cities adjust and reshape their economic, social, political and cultural structures. Moreover, the influences of globalization operate not only upon urban economic restructuring but also upon the symbolic production of the city image. In line with globalization and urban entrepreneurialism, the meanings of cultural elements are produced and circulated to symbolically represent values and the identity of the city itself. In this paper, we discuss how the image of a "globalizing Guangzhou" is produced through the symbolic meanings of the metro station advertisements in Guangzhou, China. We argue that this special process of cultural production reflects the city's intensifying involvement in the globalization process. The principal discovery of our research is that the globalization process has profoundly shaped the representational meanings of metro advertisements and has thus helped shape the image of a Chinese city that actively participates in globalization. To achieve this result, we performed a content analysis and qualitative interpretation of some of the most important meanings conveyed by the city's advertisement designs.

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Introduction

Globalization, urban development and image making

One of the most prevalent contexts in which urban development has been discussed since the late 20th century is that of globalization. As sites where economic, social and cultural activities are most intensely concentrated, urban areas have risen as the most critical nexuses in a global network. As Knox (1997) suggests, globalization has resulted in a decisive shift in the proportion of the world's economic activities that is transnational in scope, thus eclipsing the traditional functions of cities and transforming their roles into nodal points in global commodity chains. The detrimental effects of globalization, especially for underdeveloped urban areas, have been the target of frequent critiques (see, e.g., Geyer, 2005; Kalb & von der Land, 2000; Marcuse, 2004). However, another body of literature has focused on the positive and progressive aspects of globalization in boosting local urban development (see, e.g., Pernia & Quising, 2005; Bae, 2005). The external forces of transnational firms, global capital, and a new international division of labor are recognized by Friedmann and Wolff as the major determinants of urban growth (Friedmann & Wolff, 1982). In this sense,

there is a general consensus that the prosperity of cities in a global economy hinges closely on whether (a) the city can be adapted to the economic, social and cultural restructuring that comes in the wake of global forces; (b) the city seeks openness in the global context; and (c) urban governance can provide a cushion for shocks triggered by this openness (Chakravorty, 2005).

The last quarter of the 20th and the early years of the 21st centuries have seen cities make efforts to be involved in the global economic system (see, e.g., Tolosa, 2005; Gu & Tang, 2002). Along with this dynamic, we can see a world-wide wave of campaigns aimed at shaping the "city image" and the implementations of local policies such as place promotion, place marketing or city branding. The term "city image" is now closely related to the rising ideology of urban entrepreneurism, which prepares cities to attract capital footloose capital and tourism in the global context (Hall, 1992; Harvey, 1989; Hall & Hubbard, 1998; Löfgren, 2000). As Harvey (1989) explains, the increasing flexibility of international money flows has resulted in a situation that "investment increasingly takes the form of a negotiation between international finance capital and local powers doing the best they can to maximize the attractiveness of the local site as a lure for capitalist development" (Harvey, 1989, p. 5). This negotiation between flows and spatial fix of capital requires the capability of cities to reproduce and circulate information regarding the city's image for branding and for marketing the city's attractiveness. Hall (1992) further developed this concept, arguing that in an information era when industries can be essentially defined as footloose, cities can shape their own

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images and achieve national or international significance through completely new activities.

As a result, strategies of city image making are exploited as ideal weapons for producing and imagining the attractiveness and competitiveness of urban areas (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007; Ward, 2007; Young & Lever, 1997). Diverse studies have made it clear that the city image is multidimensional and covers a broad spectrum of facets (see, e.g., Vanolo, 2008a, 2008b; Luque-Martínez, Del Barrio-García, & Ibáñez-Zapata, 2007; Watkins & Hebert, 2003; Hoffman, 2003), from visual attractiveness, historical heritage, and the business environment to the reorientation of local policies (Bradley, Hall & Harrison, 2002; Rofe, 2004), and in certain cases, even the symbolic meanings of urban landscapes (Eyles & Peace, 1990; Shoval & Strom, 2009). It is evident that all of these efforts aimed at shaping city images, with their obvious hints of entrepreneurial philosophy, are economically concerned and bear the purpose of making cities into relative "stand outs" in an age of intensified competitions for investment, tourism and resources (Smith, 2006; Young & Kaczmarek, 1999).

As existing academic works have implied, the making of the city image is often fulfilled through cultural elements within urban spaces. Zukin (1995) emphasizes the symbolic meanings of urban cultures, and while her theories on the symbolism of culture mainly focus on its connection with the reorientation of the urban economy, some of her arguments can be well applied to reasoning about how a city image can be produced and imagined through the representations of the symbolic meanings of urban cultural elements. She argues that building a city depends on how people manipulate symbolic languages of exclusion and entitlement and that the look and the feel of cities reflect decisions about whom and what should be visible. This philosophy of visibility obviously includes an entrepreneurial edge predicated on deal making and image marketing. When appropriated for a discussion of city image, this argument can be modified to say that the city image represents the specific values and meanings that the city as a whole decides to display and the specific knowledge of the city that is allowed into circulation, all with the obvious purpose of attracting investment and resources that float across the global space.

So, when we try to analyze culture in the context of city image making, it should no longer be defined as the result of a social structure that has been accumulated over the long term (Peterson, 1976) but rather as a product that can also be consciously created to reflect the immediate changes in social values and ideas (Debouzy, 1990). In this sense, the production and imagination of the city image include a symbolic dimension that is in line with the practices of the "production of culture", a term coined by Richard Peterson. The production of culture approach allows us to focus on the ways in which elements of culture are fabricated in the milieus where the production of symbolic meanings is the center of all activities (Peterson, 1976). As Crane (1992) illustrates, a set of symbolic meanings are represented in cultural objects in each society. Structuralist researchers attempt to understand these meanings by interpreting the codes underlying cultural phenomena, thus revealing the latent meanings underneath the surface content. Therefore, we argue that if the cultural is exploited in the making of city image, it represents a process where cultural elements are self-consciously created, marketed, distributed, evaluated and consumed (Peterson, 1976) in the immediate milieu of an entrepreneurial urbanism that aims to absorb resources and under a broader context constituted by global forces.

Chinese cities under globalization

The globalization of major Chinese cities has played out against the background of the Opening and Reform crusade initiated by China's central leadership in 1978. This reform agenda is evident in the establishment of a socialist market economy and the implementation of an open-door policy (Wu, 2003). Along with the rapid economic growth of the past three decades, we have seen the rising of a multitude of Chinese megacities. Indicators like population growth, fixed investments, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and economic structure have supported arguments about the dominant status of large Chinese cities during the country's economic boom in the context of globalization (Zhao, Chan, & Sit, 2003). On the other hand, the growth of large Chinese cities has been largely dependent on transnational trading, Foreign Direct Investment and multinational corporations and financial institutions (Shi & Hamnett, 2002), all of which makes the discourses of Chinese urban development inseparable from wider global processes. In fact, as Logan (2002) points out, China's urban development, especially in the case of the coastal cities, is largely dependent on its connections with global capital, notably, Foreign Direct Investment. The decentralization of state power from the central communist authority to local governments has given shape to a new triangle of power, one interweaving the global, the national and the local.

However, although the literature on China's globalizing urbanism is becoming abundant, the authors of this study note that existing work linking China's urban development with globalization has focused on the institutional factors, spatial development and restructuring of urban spaces (Marton & Wu, 2006; Wei & Yu, 2006; Wu, 2003; Wu & Webber, 2004; Zhang, 2008a) and that very limited attention has been paid to the local cultural production. There are a few exceptions. For example, Wai (2006) used the term "iconography" to describe Shanghai's globally oriented urban landscapes created with the meanings of colonial nostalgia for reimagining the city in a globalizing era. In addition to these existing achievements, we make the argument that the discussion of China's globalizing urbanism should also include the dimension of "the cultural space of globalization", in which the meanings of global involvement are produced and circulated. In particular, we think it will be helpful to focus on not only the cultural meanings of physical urban spaces or the built environment but also the visual and textual media information that is embedded in the symbolic representations of urban spaces.

In this study, we intend to illustrate the manner in which the involvement of Guangzhou in the globalization process is internalized into the overall city image through the interpretation of a particular type of urban public culture, the advertisements in the city metro stations. After a brief review of the evolution of the city's policies of global involvement, we present a content analysis discussing the ways in which this specific cultural form is shaped by the ideology of constructing a globalized city. Finally, we will offer a brief qualitative interpretation of some of the advertisement designs that reflect the city's active involvement in the process of globalization.

Study area: globalizing Guangzhou under the market transition

Guangzhou, the provincial capital of China's economic giant Guangdong Province, possesses the central location of the Pearl River Delta region, which has emerged in the last two decades as the world's largest concentration of manufacturing industries and one of the most important engines of China's socialist capital accumulation (Lin, 1997). The open-door policy after 1978 brought an unprecedented economic thrust to the Pearl River Delta region and, at the same time, made it an area with the most intensive internal competition among cities (Xu & Yeh, 2005). In the early stage of the market transition, Guangzhou faced fierce competition from newly emerged regional economic bodies, such as the "special economic zones" (Zhang, 2008b), as the new global distribution of capital and resources made the rural margins of the delta

into active centers of economy and production in their own right (Sit & Yang, 1997). A turning point came in the late 1990s, when Guangzhou benefited substantially from the booming of local automobile, ship building and petrochemical industries. In 1995, Guangzhou's municipal GDP value ranked third among all Chinese cities, second only to Shanghai and Beijing, and has remained in this position since then.

One of the principal changes elicited by China's economic reform is the decentralization of policy making concerning urban development. As a result, urban governance has taken on the obligation of fundraising to further the city's fixed asset investments (Wu, 1998). As the new open-door policy allowed the city to interact with overseas investors in a more direct way (Xu & Yeh, 2005), Chinese urban authorities have been facing unprecedented challenges in attracting the footloose capital and resources of the globalizing era. Internal competition within the delta galvanized Guangzhou's campaign for further involvement in the global economic system. Although the long-term effects of Guangzhou's global involvement are yet to be identified, it seems that the city has so far benefited substantially from its global interactions. Guangzhou itself experienced a profound increase of Foreign Direct Investment in its investment structure (Wu, 1998), and from 1997 to 2002, 115 of the world's top 500 transnational corporations set up branches in Guangzhou (Xu & Yeh, 2005). We can also see from the city unemployment statistics between 2000 and 2008 that the urban unemployment rate had been steadily descending. In 2000, the city's registered unemployment rate was as high as 3.2%, while in 2008, this rate had fallen to 2.3%. It may be reasonable to assume that the city's globalizing economy had created employment opportunities and injected energy into its economic revitalization after the bitter reform of state-owned enterprises.[1] Another important observation is that in 2007, the annual Guangdong Export Fair—routinely called the "Canton Fair"—was renamed Guangdong Import and Export Fair. The duration for every session of the fair was extended, while an online fair was also introduced to cope with the limitations of physical spaces. The reorientation of this fair contributed to Guangzhou's status as one of the three exhibition centers of China (Xu & Yeh, 2005) and was paralleled by massive construction of infrastructure, including the new exhibition building complex and a sophisticated urban metro system. Moreover, Guangzhou will become the host city of the 16th Asian Games, a megaevent that is a crucial opportunity to demonstrate Guangzhou's identity as a globalizing metropolitan area.

The unemployment rate, the continuous economic growth and the increasing FDI input have produced a picture of a city that is benefiting from the global age. That also explains the local authority's many impulses for marketing a globally oriented city image, which we see in a variety of government documentations and discourses. The philosophy of a "globalizing Guangzhou" was first seen formally in government documents in the 1990s. In 1993, the local municipal government proposed to build the city into an "internationalized city", a policy orientation accompanied by a reform in the local banking and financial system. Mayor Li Ziliu also declared in the annual conference of the Guangzhou People's Congress the planning of Zhujiang New Town—the proposed city Central Business District (CBD). In the late 1990s, Guangzhou launched its conceptual plan, which reconfirmed Guangzhou's future role as a "central city in South China" and a "regional internationalized city". The succeeding mayor, Lin Shusen, further clarified the city's opening and globalization policies with the following aims: (a) to constantly increase the level of openness and thus propel modernization; (b) to actively participate in the worldwide la-

bor division and to build up better legislative, market and service environments; and (c) to encourage the city to a multidirectional and multidimensional level of openness by enhancing international exchanges and to elevate the city's worldwide popularity.[2] In 2008, the State Council of China formally announced the construction of Guangzhou into a "national central city", "comprehensive portal city" and "international metropolitan city".[3] The cultural reproduction of the city image played out under this discursive context.

Producing the image of a globalizing city

Metro station advertisements as data

This study is intended to discuss the ways in which the city image of Guangzhou as a globalizing metropolis is produced and circulated through the cultural meanings embedded in metro station advertisements. As a whole, advertisements serve as an agent between the immediate urban reality and people's perceptual world. The city image, if embedded in advertisements, provides a basis for a visualized and textualized urban identity. A few existing projects have successfully applied content analyses of visual images and textual narratives to understand urban image making (Vonolo, 2008b; Garcia, 2005) and have proven that both visual and textual information can be used as qualitative and effective data that are reflective of policy inclinations, state and popular narratives, and the process of identity formulation. In this sense, advertisements, which combine both visual and textual information, are open to in-depth content analysis. Without the commodiousness of outdoor open spaces, the metro station commuters' attention is forced onto advertisements that their eyes can barely avoid; moreover, without the material variability characteristic of the outdoor environment, advertisements in metro stations can actually manipulate the internal environment on their own.

The following analysis of advertisements will mainly focus on the extent to which metro station advertisements reflect the city's globalization process. We introduce our content analysis to present a statistical interpretation of the metro station advertisements in a quantitative manner (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). Content analysis focuses on revealing the respective frequencies of certain elements occurring in a series of bodies of contents (either texts or images), thus revealing the contained meanings. We formulate the hypothesis that the advertisements displayed in Guangzhou metro stations reflect the city's campaign to achieve an "internationalizing" or "globalizing" city image.

The authors took photographs of all metro station advertisement billboards in Guangzhou, achieving a collection of 4065 photograph copies. In total, the authors identified 847 public-interest advertisements,[4] 85 city exhibition advertisements, 421 advertisements issued by the Metro Advertisement Company exhibiting the city image and 71 for the 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games. The chosen advertisements belong to 24 distinct advertisement designs (Table 1; see Fig. 1 for numbers of photos taken at each station). These 1424 photographs will be analyzed further in the next sections of the paper.

It is also worth noting that while existing literature on globalizing Chinese cities has devoted attention mainly to state/local political institutions and the circulation of capital (Marton & Wu, 2006; Wai, 2006; Wei & Yu, 2006; Wu, 2003; Wu & Zhang, 2007), the

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[1] *Data sources*: Guangzhou Yearbook of Statistics, 2007; Yearbook of Statistics for the Pearl River Delta, Yangtze River Delta, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, 2008.

[2] Government Reports given by Mayor Lin Shusen in the Conferences of Guangzhou People's Congress 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001.

[3] The Conspectus of the Reform and Development Plan of Pearl River Delta (2008–2020).

[4] Using advertisements for promoting public virtues is a common practice by the authorities in China, and it is also an important channel through which the government produces mainstream ideologies about the urban identities.

Table 1
Types and designs of the chosen advertisements.

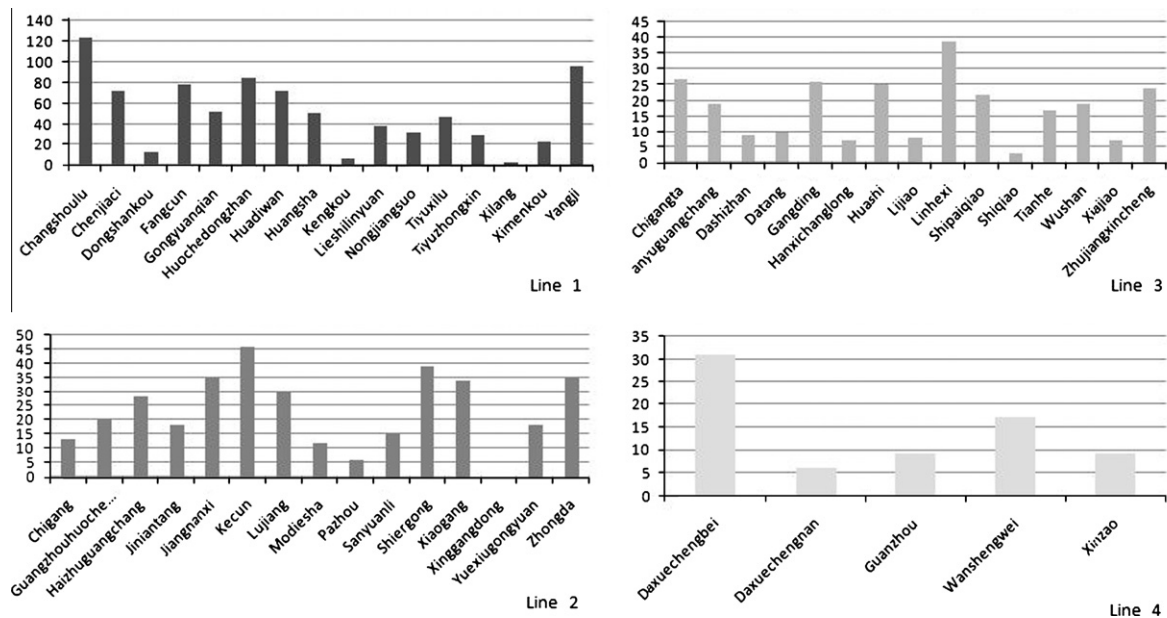| Type of advertisements	Individual designs	Number of each design	Producer of advertisements
On the theme of "a new and civilized Guangzhou"	10 Designs mainly featuring the urban landscape	4, 6, 20, 30, 42, 64, 82, 100, 142, 282	The Guangzhou municipal government
	2 Designs mainly featuring people	11, 64	
For publicizing the 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games	1 Design featuring racing	6	The organizing committee for the 16th Asian Games
	1 Design featuring judo	7	
	1 Design featuring diving	9	
	1 Design featuring the games mascots	20	
For city exhibitions	1 Design for the third Guangzhou Triennial Exhibition	7	The government, exhibition centers and the art museum
	4 Designs for the 13th Guangzhou International Art Fair	11,13,13,14	
	1 Design for Deutschland und China Gemeinsam in Bewegung	27	
Issued by the metro advertisement company	1 Design featuring the urban landscape	43	The metro advertisement company
	1 Design for advertising Metro Line 1 using traditional Chinese cultural elements	378	

Fig. 1. Amounts of advertisement photographs taken at each station.

advertisement designs we identified for analysis suggest that the making of Guangzhou's city image has, in effect, involved more diverse actors. In addition to the government authorities who play an obviously significant role, other actors—including public institutions like the museums or the exhibition centers and state-run companies like the *Metro Advertisement Company*—are also involved in this broad agenda of image making. Superficially, we can identify two types of institutions—the government authorities and exhibitions organizers—that play more significant roles in the production of those images. We have found that there is an obvious absence of grassroots organizations in producing the globalizing identity of Guangzhou. On the other hand, the top-down forces of the government authorities are still predominant, in both negotiating the city's image and in promoting the Asian Games. This observation supports Wu's (2000) argument about Chinese entrepreneurial governance and the strong involvement of the state in the implementation of developmental strategies. Nevertheless, the situation is still more complex than the normative government/capital framework that is suggested by the existing literature. In particular, exhibition organizers like the exhibition

centers and the art museum are salient in bringing nonlocal cultural elements into the collective city image.

Analyzing the visual data

The collected visual data was analyzed in two phases. In the first, different types of elements—representational, imagery, and abstract—were extracted from each of the photographs and are defined as the individual units of analysis. We divided all identified elements into two categories: elements that reflect the city's involvement in the globalization process, the "*G Elements*"; and elements that do not, the "*NG Elements*". The categories and types of "*G Elements*" are presented below (Table 2). The categorization of "*G elements*" and "*NG elements*" is based on the authors' cultural framework of research, and we draw this categorization from our understanding of the popular perceptions of the global and the nonglobal elements within both civic and governmental discourses that develop an imagined borderline between "*authentic*" Chinese elements and elements that are alien to *locally based* Chinese cultural and social realities. This categorization is a workable

Table 2
Categories and types of "*G Elements*".

Categories	Types	Elements
Titles and bylines		
Graphics	Representational	Photos of foreigners
		Image of the City CBD
		High buildings or a concentration of skyscrapers
		Foreign landscapes or cultural forms
	Imagery	Images of modernist statue
	Abstract	Abstractionist drawings
		Impressionist paintings or drawings
Others	–	Advertisements as a whole publicizing an international event: the Asian Games
		Advertisements titles or bylines in foreign languages

Table 3
The scoring system.

Scores	Percentage of number of "*G elements*" in one photograph to number of total elements (%)	Percentage of surface covered by "*G elements*" to surface of whole advertisement (%)
0	0	0
1	0–20	0–20
2	20–40	20–40
3	40–60	40–60
4	60–80	60–80
5	80–100	80–100

shorthand for reaching an imagined dichotomy between local cultural elements and global elements. However, we are also aware that the term globalization suggests a contemporaneous multiplicity of the spatial and that there is no single globalization across the world's spaces (Massey, 2005). As Massey (2005) suggests, globalization does not mean a normative path along which all places go to the same destination; neither is globalization an inevitable process that progresses forward in one single normative model or one that represents the one and only form of *globalness* (Massey, 2005). Indeed, we also know that the two fields of local and global are interpermeable, showing different interconnections under different social and cultural imaginations: there is no single, clearly defined boundary between local and global (Amin, 2002). In this sense, the authors do not intend to provide any stereotype for researching all cultural elements under the globalization process, but in this study, the meanings of globalization are imagined through the G–NG duality that we apply in the following analyses.

To quantitatively measure the extent to which each individually chosen advertisement expresses an "internationalizing" or "globalizing" city image, we introduce a system for evaluating the advertisements. Because one limitation of content analysis is the frequency with which an item occurs does not indicate an item's importance, this scoring system is divided along two separate axes: (1) the ratio of the number of "*G Elements*" to the number of total elements and (2) the ratio of the area covered by "*G Elements*" to that of the whole picture.

Each advertisement is deconstructed into a series of discrete elements, and the "*G Elements*" within are identified. Then two scores, each ranging from 0 to 5, are ascribed to a specific photo based on the two dimensions introduced above and according to the scoring system demonstrated in Table 3. The two scores are added, and the arithmetic average (without weighting) is obtained. The average score is defined as the final indicator of how a specific advertisement reflects the globalization process of Guangzhou city. The result of the analysis is recorded in the Standardized Coding Sheet as shown in Fig. 2.

The final scores of the advertisement photographs vary from 0 to 5. All advertisements for the 2010 Asian Games Advertisements score a five are because these advertisements, as a whole, reflect an important international event held in Guangzhou. Advertisements scoring 4.5, 4 or 3.5 are mainly about city exhibitions. The cultural orientation of such exhibitions provides a useful lens through which we can capture the local impacts of the global flow of culture. Advertisements of "a new and civilized Guangzhou" are scored relatively lower at 2.5, 2 or 1.5. While some advertisements conspicuously feature certain "*G Elements*", the relatively small area covered by the themes of "*G Elements*" negatively influenced the average scores. The score of each individual advertisement design is presented in Table 4.

Fig. 2. The Standardized Coding Sheet (based on Wimmer & Dominick, 2000).

Of all of the advertisement designs, 22 contain at least one "*G Element*", totaling a high percentage of 91.7%. Among all of the advertisements, 6959 total elements are identified, and within 1844 are defined as "*G Elements*", for a percentage of 26.5%. The percentage of "*G elements*" is lower, mainly due to the large number of literal elements, i.e., titles and bylines that are mostly in the Chinese language, while the effect of design no. 24—a design advertising Metro Line 1 and consisting completely of traditional Chinese cultural elements—is also salient. However, of all 4059 graphical elements, 1630 can be defined as "*G Elements*", for a percentage of 40.2% (Table 5).

To obtain an overall impression of the level at which the metro station advertisements can represent the globalizing image of the city, we coin an indicator that we call the "*G Element Index*" to show the extent to which the metro station advertisements are designed to convey the image of the city as one that is actively involved in the globalization process. The equation for calculating the "*G Element Index*" is

$$I_G = \sum_{i=1}^{n=24} w_i g_i \Big/ \sum_{i=1}^{n=24} 5 \times w_i,$$

where g_i, represents the final score for each of the studied advertisement designs; n, is the total number of designs; "5", is the score

Table 4
Scores of individual advertisement designs.

Design no.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Score	2	0	5	4	4.5	5	3.5	2
Design no.	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Score	3.5	3.5	3.5	2.5	4	2.5	2.5	2.5
Design no.	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Score	2.5	5	1.5	2	2.5	2	2	0

Table 5
Percentage of "*G Elements*" in all types of elements and graphical elements only.

All elements	G elements	NG elements
Percentage (%)	26.5	73.5
Graphical elements	G elements	NG elements
Percentage (%)	40.2	59.8

of an advertisement whose discrete elements can be all defined as "*G Elements*"; W_i, represents the number of advertisements of each design; and I_G is the final value of the "*G Element index*".

The final value of I_G is **0.36**. This suggests that the theme of globalization has been playing an important role in the construction of the city's image and that global forces have already been involved in the reproduction and reformulation of the urban identity. Given that design no. 24 may have a great influence on the final score with its large quantity,[5] the variable *w* is excluded from the equation, and the remodeled value of I_G is **0.57**, suggesting that elements that reflect that the city's image as a globalizing metropolis have been significantly produced through metro station advertisement.

Qualitative interpretations of the advertisements

A qualitative analysis is also applied for interpreting further the particular advertisement designs from a more microscopic and situated perspective. By examining the visual semiotic units, slogans and other literal texts, we develop an in-depth interpretation of several of the most important advertisements from the previous stage of analysis.

Among the 24 designs, five exploit the image of Zhujiang New Town Central Business District, Guangzhou's future CBD which is, at present, under intense construction (Fig. 3). These five designs account for a total of 574 copies, and all of them are distributed relatively evenly throughout the metro station network. That this CBD is chosen as a major symbol directly reflects Guangzhou's aspiration for urban economic transformation—from a traditional socialist/post-socialist industrial city to an international center of consumption and service.[6] The new urban CBD is a key project prescribed by Guangzhou's collective development strategies, and according to the 2006 conceptual plan, the CDB plays a central role in Guangzhou's transformation of economic space. In 2006, an official document was issued to clarify the government's policies for encouraging foreign enterprises to establish headquarters or regional headquarters in Guangzhou, which would contribute to the construction of the city's "HQ Economy".[7] The construction of Zhujiang new town CBD ably responded to this request. It is now formally titled the "Guangzhou Central Business District of the
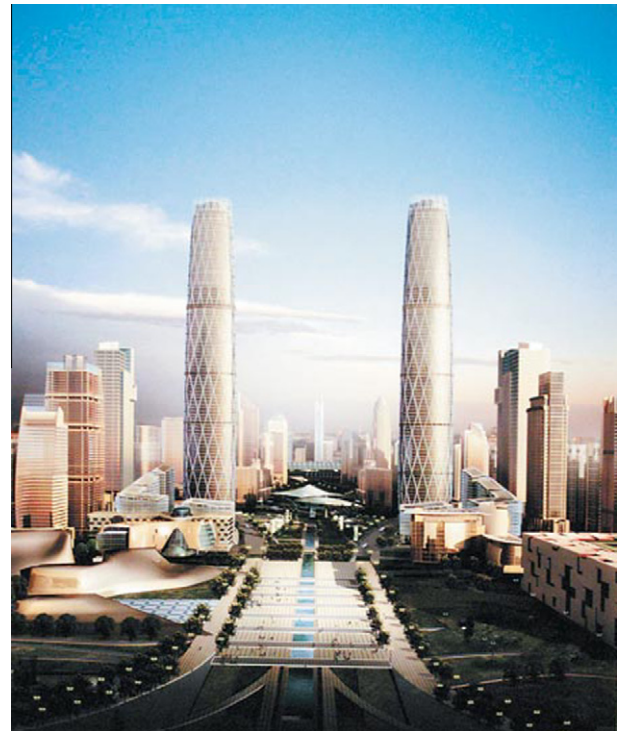

Fig. 3. The proposed Zhujiang New Town CBD after completion. *Source*: online graph: http://www.conexpoasia.com/EN/Overview/SouthChinaProjects/images/ZhujiangNewTown1.jpg.

21st Century (abbreviated GCBD 21)" and symbolizes Guangzhou's proposed position in the 21st century world urban hierarchy as a regional international financial and service center. On the other hand, the magnificent vision and architecture of this urban development also make it a deserving urban flagship project that the government is willing to present as an embodiment of the city's new identity (Fig. 3).

Seventy-one copies of the ad for the 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games were found in the station network. Although the number is minor compared to that of other advertisement designs, the pictures reminding people of the approaching of the 16th Asian Games, the largest international event ever held in Guangzhou, are significant. Guangzhou's pursuit for the Asian Games can be traced back to the 1980s, when unfortunately, the state central government showed little support for this proposal.[8] In 2004, Guangzhou launched its first formal bid for the Asian Games and was finally chosen as the host city for the 2010 16th Asian Games after a long wait. The Asian Games represent a crucial step in Guangzhou's pursuit for an international identity. Undoubtedly, the benefits brought by the Asian Games, both economic and political, will be enormous. However, it is even more significant that Guangzhou can build up a more extroverted city image and cultural identity through an international event. In the slogan of the Guangzhou Games—"Thrilling Games, Harmonious Asia"—the traditional Confucian idea of "harmony (*hexie*)" that has also been an important element of state ideology becomes a symbol of an ideal international order according to Chinese cultural values. This idea of *hexie* advocates a world where different civilizations and cultures exist in harmonious juxtaposition, with cultural

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[5] The authors argue that the large quantity of design no. 24 is disproportionate to its importance simply because most copies of advertisements in this design are used by the Metro Advertisement Company deliberately to occupy vacant places on the walls that have not been rented by companies, firms, governmental authorities or organizations.

[6] Guangzhou Conceptual Plan of Urban Development 2000.

[7] Government Document 2006, No. 34. Regulations on encouraging foreign capital to establish headquarters or regional headquarters in Guangzhou.

[8] Online news: Guangzhou's Path to the Asian Games, http://gb.cri.cn/20864/2009/04/02/3205s2474365.htm. The disfavor from the state central government was partially because Beijing was also proposing to host the Asian Games at that time, and the central government of China obviously preferred the capital city to Guangzhou.

Fig. 4. One of the advertisement designs for the 13th Guangzhou International Art Fair.

Fig. 5. One of the advertisement designs for "a new, civilized and harmonious Guangzhou.

differences respected but mutual exchange between cultures enhanced at the same time.[9] The city, as well as the whole state, is trying to convey its dreams regarding the identity of a world of global interactions with, rather than simply being connected to, the outside world.

Both the new urban CBD and the Asian Games are important *G elements* identified in the previous section. Advertisements featuring the two elements are all initiated by the local government. As we can see from previous studies, the "place-making" agendas of Chinese local governments are largely oriented by prestigious megaprojects (Xu & Yeh, 2005), to which our above observations offer no exception. We can see that the cultural production of the urban identity in Guangzhou is by no means separable from the "real" changes to the urban economic structure and spatiality. In fact, the visual messages contained in the advertisements can be considered as the symbolic representation of the development strategies and the investment behaviors of the local government.

Other than the advertised megaprojects discussed above, some other advertisement designs, in their smaller numbers and relatively concentrated allocations, reflect the city's international involvement from a more grassroots perspective. For example, in one advertisement design for the 13th Guangzhou International

Art Fair,[10] the image of an impressionist painting covers nearly 4/5 of the total surface (Fig. 4), and in another design dedicated to the same event, a modernist brass statue portraying a man playing a trumpet is used as the main design element. In both ads, the Chinese name of the Art Fair is immediately followed by an English translation, and the English words "Art Fair" are specially highlighted. All of these design ideas are applied to show the city's rising intimacy with foreign cultures, and through these designs, Guangzhou is depicted as a city where different cultural backgrounds can converge in harmonious coexistence. In fact, this Art Fair is indeed becoming increasingly "international". In 2008, over 100 artists from 19 countries and regions exhibited their works in the 13th Art Fair, and masterpieces of Salvador Dali and Theodore Aman were enjoyed by the local citizens.[11]

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[9] See Chinese President Hu Jintao's address at the 60th Anniversary of United Nations, 15th September, 2005.

[10] For details of the Guangzhou International Art Fair, please see http://www.gzart-fair.com/ace (English version available). This art fair is organized by the China Artists Association, with strong support from the Guangzhou Municipal Government. It is also a large-scale exchange fair of art work and is warmly welcomed by the new urban classes of fortune and prestige. The cultural inclinations presented by the fair can, to some extent, be considered representative of the mainstream discourses of the urban elites.

[11] Online news: http://www.gdwh.com.cn/whwnews/2008/1209/article_245.html.

[12] Unlike the Guangzhou International Art Fair, the Guangzhou Triennial Exhibition is characterized by less government involvement and is largely initiated by spontaneous artists and art theorists.

Such impressionist or abstract artistic images can also easily be found in the advertisement design for the 3rd Guangzhou Triennial Exhibition,[12] an art exposition as well as an academic forum. This design is characterized by the repetition of some simplified graphic symbols, creating typical abstract verve. Interestingly, the theme of this latest session of the Guangzhou Triennial is "*Post-Modernism*", a popular topic within western academic scholarship, although both colonialism and postcolonialism have left fewer hints on the social and cultural realities of China.

Other advertisement designs relate to the city's global connections from the perspective of the everyday life of the people. In one design for "a new, civilized and harmonious Guangzhou", two foreigners living in Guangzhou are selected among four local Chinese people. One of the two foreigners is a professor from Australia who has been living in Guangzhou for 40 years, and the other is a 7-years-old British boy who was born in Guangzhou (Fig. 5). The presence of foreign faces symbolizes Guangzhou's increasing cultural diversity and an urban identity that combines both local and nonlocal social groups. The cultural aspect of the globalization of Guangzhou, then, deals with not only the reproduction of symbolic meanings but also the "real" social relations that actually constitute the urban cultural mosaic.

While the advertisements discussed herein have presented an impressive story of a globalizing Guangzhou, traditional Chinese elements do not remain silent. Most conspicuously, one advertisement design for the urban Metro Line 1 consists completely of traditional Chinese poetic images: a Chinese porcelain vase, a branch of plum blossoms and a bright Moon. In this advertisement design, each station along Line 1 is represented by a plum flower. The porcelain, the plum, and the Moon are all important elements of Chinese romantic literal traditions. The symbolic meanings of these images can be diverse, but they are, to a large extent, representative of local Chinese cultural traditions. Thus, we agree with Marston, Woodward, and Jones (2007) that globalization does not represent hegemonic forces that trickle down a scalar ladder of global–local, homogenizing localities with transcendent power. Rather, the imagination of the meanings of globalization is in fact a *social site* where relations, complexity and difference come into play (Marston et al., 2007). Even in the midst of a dramatic globalization process, the city image of Guangzhou is not shaped by global forces alone. The presence of traditional Chinese cultural styles tells the story that global forces are always mediated by local elements, and the global and local are mutually constituted in one holistic picture (Amin, 2002; Wu & Ma, 2006). A co-presence of multiple spaces is constructed when the global and local forces reach a delicately balanced relationship (Amin & Graham, 1997).

Concluding remarks

The findings of this research correspond well with existing discussions of China's urban entrepreneurialism and transnational urbanism (Cartier, 2002; Wu, 2002). Instead of investigating physical landscapes, this study presents a discussion of the image of a city in a representationalist and constructionist manner. The combination of the quantitative content analysis and the qualitative approach proves to be effective in understanding the process of the making of the city's image in a globalized context. On the one hand, the content analysis method allows an insight into the processes where the metro station advertisements are created as elements of a larger culture, manufactured and produced; on the other hand, the qualitative interpretation is more oriented toward understanding the ways in which this produced image can be evaluated and consumed, thus contributing to the formulation of the collective urban identity.

In most of the evaluated advertisements, the city's image is designed to include certain messages concerning the city's intensifying involvement in a global network. The metro station advertisements serve as a channel through which the image of a globalizing city is produced and circulated as part of the identity of the city. Unlike the profit-oriented cultural representation and production discussed by Zukin (1995), advertisements in this study also embody ideological and symbolic meanings of the urban developmental philosophy. The image of a globalizing Guangzhou inscribed in these advertisements echoes the city's intended position as "international metropolitan city", and in this way, the city demonstrates just how it decided on the values that should be made visible, an idea in accordance with the argument that the production of culture is a set of symbolic elements, whose content and form are understood as functions of the social contexts (or milieus) of their creation, manufacture, marketing, use and evaluation (Santoro, 2008).

The chosen "*G Elements*" cover a broad range of urban realities, from the city CBD that symbolizes the city's future economic booming and the aesthetic appeals under a modern or postmodern global context to the ordinary foreign residents who peacefully live within in the city, making the urban kaleidoscope more colorful and attractive. Thus, the globalization process of Guangzhou should not be understood only from a developmental or economic perspective. Instead, it should be noted that the specific processes taking place under a global context are multidimensional and multileveled. Accordingly, cultural changes taking place in the entire metro station advertisement network require continued academic attention. In our research, the discussion of the metro station advertisements is focused on material objects, but it is also essential to investigate the ways in which people as the producers and consumers of city's image create, perceive and evaluate the same. These enquiries open up new possibilities for further research on globalization, transnational urban spaces of culture, and the making of city images.

At the end of this paper, we would like to reemphasize that our stand here is not to present any normative model of cultural production and city image making in the context of global involvement. Instead, the picture we have presented is merely the cultural imaginary in Guangzhou, and obviously, it is not the only face of the cultural space of globalization in China or around the world (Massey, 2005). The term "global" means neither a transcendent ontological body with subsuming powers nor "a jumble of unfettered mobility" of cultural dissemination (Marston, Jones, & Woodward, 2005, p. 423). On the contrary, the cultural imaginary that is embodied through the symbolic meanings of the advertisements provides a lens through which we can see the ways that the globalization process of Guangzhou is constructed and mobilized as a *social site*, as proposed by Marston et al. (2005), where relations, objects, orders and practices act upon the materiality and singularities of space. On the one hand, the potentialities for creative moments of change, fluidity, and mobility allow for a local–nonlocal intersection that brings transformation to the identity and image of the city, while on the other hand, the meanings of locality are not erased. The systematic ordering of the *site* also makes room for the presence of relatively stable objects and practices—as we have seen from the last advertisement discussed here in detail (Jones, Woodward, & Marston, 2007; Marston et al., 2005). Moreover, the advertisements are by no means exhaustive of the local imaginary of globalization. The meanings of globalization consist of a full set of relations, practices and representations. The scope of the imaginary of globalization in Guangzhou, however, is much broader than the picture we can present in this paper.

Acknowledgements

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