Learning from Shenzhen

China's Post-Mao Experiment from Special Zone to Model City

EDITED BY MARY ANN O'DONNELL,
WINNIE WONG, AND
JONATHAN BACH

The University of Chicago Press
Chicago and London

The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637
The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London

Printed in the United States of America

25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 1 2 3 4 5

ISBN-13: 978-0-226-40109-6 (cloth)
ISBN-13: 978-0-226-40112-6 (paper)
ISBN-13: 978-0-226-40126-3 (e-book)
DOI: 10.7208/chicago/9780226401263.001.0001

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: O'Donnell, Mary Ann, 1964– author, editor. | Wong, Winnie Won Yin, author, editor. | Bach, Jonathan P. G., author, editor.
Title: Learning from Shenzhen : China's post-Mao experiment from special zone to model city / edited by Mary Ann O'Donnell, Winnie Wong, and Jonathan Bach.
Description: Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 2016. | "This volume developed out of two conferences: 'Shenzhen+China, Utopias+Dystopias,' held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2011, and 'Learning from Shenzhen,' held at the Shenzhen Land Use Resources and Planning Commission in 2011 as part of the Shenzhen Urbanism Biennale"—ECIP data. | Includes index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2016019384 | ISBN 9780226401096 (cloth : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780226401126 (pbk. : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780226401263 (e-book)
Subjects: LCSH: Shenzhen Shi (China)—Congresses. | Shenzhen Jingji Tequ (Shenzhen Shi, China)—Congresses. | Urban renewal—China—Shenzhen Shi—Congresses. | Free ports and zones—China—Congresses. | Municipal government—China—Shenzhen Shi—Congresses.
Classification: LCC HT178.C62 S54 2016 | DDC 307.3/416095127—dc23 LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2016019384

♾ This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).

Contents

PART 3 Extensions (2004–Present)

Foreword

EZRA F. VOGEL

No city in the world has ever grown as rapidly as Shenzhen, China's southern gateway to the outside world. In 1978, when the Reform and Opening policy was introduced in China, Shenzhen was a small town of some thirty thousand people, surrounded by paddy fields. By 2010, it had a population of more than ten million people—more than New York, America's largest city. No tall buildings were more than thirty years old. It glittered with modern stores, hotels, offices, and restaurants.

Mao, convinced that the Chinese situation was ripe for Communism, announced that a single spark can light a prairie fire. When many Chinese were tired of the failures of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, Shenzhen became the spark that ignited reforms in China. In 1979 it was made into a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and became, as the authors of this book relate, a new model for all of China. The story of Shenzhen in these thirty years is an unusual mixture of urban development, of a rigid socialist system stretched to incorporate a market economy. It became the crucible where new ideas from the entire world flowed into a country that had stagnated for almost two decades. After 1979, Shenzhen became an experimental ground, a key link in the transmission of new ideas where high Chinese high officials came to visit to learn about market economies and observe the introduction of modern architecture and industry.

Shenzhen brought together officials from Beijing, Guangdong provincial headquarters in Guangzhou, and Bao'an County, as well as outsiders from Hong Kong and the entire world. In Shenzhen, people who had been worlds apart struggled to find ways to communicate with each other and groped for a way to make the Reform and Opening policy work without a rebellion of

4

How to Be a Shenzhener: Representations of Migrant Labor in Shenzhen's Second Decade

ERIC FLORENCE

> Shenzhen is the resting post of our youth, we should therefore extend our youth in this resting post, since we have walked on the road to *dagong*, so it is a youth without regret and a shameless destiny.
>
> *SHENZHEN SPECIAL ZONE DAILY*, March 25, 1994

> They did not do anything extraordinary, they just offered their youth silently to the Chinese people . . . Yesterday, they awoke Shenzhen with the sound of their feet; they have created the Chinese miracle. Today, they have stepped into the new century and have initiated a more beautiful and more resplendent tomorrow.
>
> *SHENZHEN SPECIAL ZONE DAILY*, March 29, 1998

Shenzhen Spirit: New Models of Reform

During the 1980s, the task of modeling post-Mao reforms had fallen to the first generation of party leaders in Shenzhen. However, in the decade after Deng Xiaoping's 1992 Southern Tour, the task of modeling the new socialist citizen fell to migrant workers from China's hinterlands. This chapter examines how migrant workers in Shenzhen were enlisted in this political discourse through encouraging their participation in the public sphere of newspapers and magazine publications. Based on a close reading of the Shenzhen press in the years 1994, 1998, and 1999, this chapter examines shifting definitions of the model rural migrant to Shenzhen within and against the hegemonic construction of "Shenzhen Spirit."

In 1994, the official model of the Shenzhen migrant worker exalted self-reliance and initiative in contrast to the Maoist valuation of self-sacrifice.[1] However, as Shenzhen was increasingly integrated into the world economy during the late 1990s, the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) became closely associated with the notion of youth. Looking at the period following the Fifteenth Party Congress (1997), which restructured state-owned enterprises and solidified President and Secretary General Jiang Zemin's emphasis on economic development, this chapter tracks how the Shenzhen press in the period from

1998 to 1999 idealized migrant workers with respect to the challenges and opportunities of the SEZ's competitive environment. This modified model called upon migrant workers to liberate and nurture their individualized and individualizing abilities, ideals, and aspirations.

As with the 1980s construction of post-Mao socialist heroes, the 1990s construction of model workers encapsulated a set of values that linked Mao-era identities to the Reform and Opening policy identities. With respect to labor, the 1990s Shenzhen model linked Chinese Communist Party ethics of "self-sacrifice" and "contribution" to new values such as "autonomy" and "competition." The rhetorical vehicle for this social construction was "Shenzhen Spirit," which in turn was a local articulation of national policy—the simultaneous construction of material and spiritual civilization.

The Shenzhen Spirit was formulated over the late 1980s but officially concretized in 1990. A "bull clearing the wilderness" (*tuo huang niu*) and "opening up" had long been the two metaphors most closely associated with the early construction of the Shenzhen SEZ. At a 1987 meeting of the Shenzhen City Working Group on Thought and Political Work, the values of that early construction period were expanded to include "opening up" (*kaituo*), "creating" (*chuangxin*), and "devoting one's whole life" (*xianshen*).[2] "Clearing the wilderness" and "opening up" entailed the idea of doing something for the SEZ, while "sacrificing oneself," or "devoting one's whole life," to the nation reprised Mao-era ethics, when individual interests were to be subsumed under the collective interest of constructing socialism. In Shenzhen, the new "collective interest" took the form of the economic development and prosperity of the SEZ, and this required a new kind of ideal subject, "a person able to transform her- or himself and the socialist world."[3]

The notion that the ideal Shenzhen subject would be able to create something new drew from the novelty of the SEZ itself and was framed in contrast to the economic failure of Maoism. In the construction of an identity for Shenzhen, socialist values such as self-sacrifice and collectivism were downplayed in favor of rhetoric of pioneering and newness.[4] In 1990, the City Party Standing Committee added "unity" (*tuanjie*) to the list of official values, and this new synthesis was then officially called the "Shenzhen Spirit" and was approved by Jiang Zemin.[5] So defined, Shenzhen Spirit celebrated the values of "deciding for oneself, strengthening oneself, autonomy, competition, taking risks and facing danger, equity, effectiveness, and legality [*zizhu, ziqiang, jingzheng, ganmao fengxian de gainian, pingdeng, xiaolü gainian, yiji fazhi gainian*]." The Shenzhen Spirit was seen as central to the construction of post-Mao society.

Building "spiritual civilization" in Shenzhen opened a new space for the

shaping of a new post-Mao era socialist subject along with the values, norms, and attitudes this subject ought to embody and exemplify.[6] The ideological link between "material and spiritual civilization" and the Shenzhen Spirit solidified during Deng Xiaoping's 1992 Southern Tour. Spiritual civilization referred to cultural, scientific, and ideological dimensions of society in contrast to the economic dimensions of material civilization. In fact, both a 1995 volume edited by Shenzhen's then mayor, Li Youwei, as well as a 2000 Shenzhen-level officially sponsored volume reviewing twenty years of development of Shenzhen emphasized that during his 1992 Southern Tour, Deng Xiaoping distinguished "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" from other political systems because, in China, both material and spiritual civilization had yet to develop.[7] The relationship between spiritual and material civilization was often referred to as "seizing with both hands, [and] both hands need to be firm." The goal of material civilization was clear—building China's economy. However, the goal of spiritual civilization work was less clear because it entailed modeling a new kind of worker, "the four-haves person"—that is, "a new person with ideals, culture, ethics, and discipline."[8] In fact, the model of the four-halves person was not adopted until the Third Plenum of the Fourteenth Party Congress in 1994, well into the second decade of Shenzhen reforms.

This model illustrates the extent to which productive forces were linked with building a market economy that rests on a neo-liberal conception of the market which "is not taken to be a natural formation, but [as] both a system and a subjectivity that has to be actively produced and facilitated."[9] In other words, rural migrants to Shenzhen had to be taught how to be workers. In turn, as they learned to be Shenzheners, they also became a model for the rest of the country. Ironically, while rural migrant workers became increasingly central to Shenzhen's economic development—and indeed that of the entire nation—their exploitation challenged a ruling party whose founding narratives continued to reject capitalist exploitation.

Chinese Migrant Workers in Western Theory

The experiences of rural migrants to and in Shenzhen factories not only influenced the construction of post-Mao models of labor and laborers in China but also shaped Western models of emergent labor regimes in postsocialist China. Through reforms initiated in Shenzhen, China's rural labor became the core element of a "labor-squeezing strategy of development."[10] Simultaneously, former workers and employees of state-owned enterprises lost their lifelong employment and their subsidized access to social welfare. Together,

these processes unleashed what Ching Kwan Lee separated into "three patterns" of the working-class transition in urban China: "the making of the global peasant worker," "the remaking of the socialist worker," and "the unmaking of the redundant worker."[11]

At the same time, Shenzhen catalyzed the political and economic restructuring of the Pearl River Delta, where local governments produced no longer in accordance to a national plan but in competition with one another to provide investors with land, infrastructure, and labor.[12] The regional relationships between cities changed from integration to competition, and this spurred maximum labor flexibility and kept wages relatively low, even in comparison with other Southeast Asian countries.[13] In Shenzhen, this was accomplished through the combination of labor control mechanisms and population control alongside intensification and concealment of exploitation.[14] By "externalizing" migrant workers and exerting everyday "routine repression,"[15] the household registration system (*hukou*) and the several certificates and permits required for employment and residence in the city further enabled the implementation of a highly flexible production regime, or what Robin Cohen has called a "labor repressive system."[16]

Modeling Labor: How to Be a Shenzhener

> In the field of experimentation of socialism with Chinese characteristics, how should we shape the appearance of the Shenzhen person?
>
> *SHENZHEN EVENING DAILY*, March 17, 1994

Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, Chinese newspaper accounts of migrant workers presented a generally homogenizing and threatening picture of them.[17] Rural people migrating to or staying in cities were described chiefly as masses flowing into Chinese cities. A very simplified narrative structure of such press accounts usually explained that poverty compelled migrants to leave the countryside, forcing them to "pour blindly" into the cities, which disturbed the urban social order. These press accounts would then call for strong measures by urban authorities to control or expel the migrant workers from the cities. In these articles, rural migrants were seldom given a personality of their own or described as individuals with any personal will. Instead, they were portrayed as masses entirely motivated by the search for profit, a drive that would possibly lead them to commit crimes.[18] On the whole, rural migrants were not asked by journalists to express their personal or collective experiences.

Shenzhen's newspapers also depicted migrant workers as homogenized types; however, articles dedicated to rural workers were not as numerous—and the tone was not as passionate—as those found in Beijing newspapers. More important, at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, several Shenzhen magazines appeared that focused on migrant workers' experiences, including *Dapengwan*, *Dagongmei*, and *Wailaigong*. More broadly, in Shenzhen newspapers, the narration of migrant work (*dagong*) in articles written by both professional journalists and migrant workers themselves became increasingly popular.[19] These dedicated magazines encouraged migrant workers to write about their experiences through articles, poems, short stories, or novels.[20]

Both in these magazines and within the Shenzhen official press, the depictions of voiceless masses of people that were flooding into Guangdong Province gave way to descriptions of smaller groups of people often interviewed by journalists. This change was also reflected in the use of pictures of smaller groups of often smiling people rather than of indiscriminate crowds. While this change could eventually be seen nationwide by the 2000s, it was apparent as early as 1994 in the newspapers of Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta—for instance, in Guangzhou's *Yangcheng Wanbao* and *Nanfang Ribao* and *Shenzhen Tequbao* and *Wanbao*. This change can be explained by the important place that migrant workers occupied in Shenzhen and other SEZs. Moreover, as the inflow of foreign capital increased during the 1990s, attracting cheap and young migrant labor to Shenzhen actually became necessary for local authorities. In the delta, earlier than elsewhere, migrant workers were soon identified as a component of economic reforms the state could not do without. It became also more and more important to present an attractive image of Shenzhen and an image of a hardworking and disciplined labor force.[21] Such shifts in representation are hence evidence of a gradual change in the official conceptions of rural-to-urban migration.[22]

The "How to Be a Shenzhen Person" debate was launched in 1994 by party authorities. In fact, this campaign was part of the spiritual civilization propaganda work that was aimed at "mobilizing the participation and consciousness of moral construction among Shenzhen people."[23] It was initially planned to last for four months, but because of its unexpected success, was extended five more months. It took place through the media in newspapers chiefly via letters to the editors, radio and television programs, as well as within workplaces. Local officials and white collars were the main participants in the debate. Very few rural migrants participated in the discussions, and the few workers who did participate expressed frustration about their second-class status in the city. Clark put it this way: "What emerged from the debate was less a collective Shenzhen identity hoped for by authorities, than a realization of 'communities' proliferating throughout the city, marked by class, education, native place and goals."[24]

Based on a combination of the "How to Be a Shenzhen Person" campaign, Deng Xiaoping's thought, and the party's basic guidelines, the Shenzhen Party Committee published a policy entitled "Norms of Shenzhen Inhabitant Behavior" in 1994, which was addressed to all its inhabitants. These norms included such phrases as "love one's country," "build Shenzhen," "open up and create," "unite and offer contributions," "do all one can at work," "serve the public," "respect discipline and the law," "fair competition," "be civilized and polite," and "love the environment."[25]

Many of Shenzhen's defining values are gathered in the text that launched the debate in March 1994 and were used recurrently to describe rural migrant workers. In this text, the reference to the sacrifices one ought to make for the SEZ actually pointed to early 1980s narratives of Shenzhen as a desolate place to which people came with the ideal of constructing the SEZ. Stressing the disinterested nature of these early "builders" allows them to be distinguished from the "gold diggers."[26] The next paragraph, however, pointed to the highly recurring narrative of "going forward and grasping opportunities" as well as "the need to adapt to competition," which would emerge as a core theme in the second half of the 1990s. The rhetoric of "being able to grasp opportunities" in order to avoid elimination echoed the post-Mao era ethos of economic reform and was a major mode of justification for social stratification.[27]

The World of Dagong

In January 1994, the leading newspaper in the SEZ, the *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily* (*Shenzhen Tequbao*) began to dedicate a full page to migrant workers. This page was called "World of *Dagong*" and included articles, essays, poems, and images of migrant workers. From 1994 to 1999, "World of *Dagong*" presented migrant workers as a crucial component of the Shenzhen identity, allowing for the articulation of the defining values of the "Shenzhen Spirit" detailed above. The term *dagong* was a Cantonese term from 1960s Hong Kong denoting mobile, commodified labor.[28] However, via "World of *Dagong*," commodifying one's labor would emerge as a new—and valorized—social identity. The editorial of the very first issue of the "World of *Dagong*" special page, published on January 7, 1994, announced, "Millions of migrant workers have created the myth of Shenzhen, and we eventually possess a world that is ours . . . *Dagongren* has been the noun for manual laborers: but today, its

connotation has gone far beyond this meaning. Blue collars are *dagong* people, white collars are also *dagong* people, all the workers who are laboring industriously are *dagong* people. Today, for this growing community of *dagong* people, we have solemnly created this special page called 'World of *Dagong*.' In this world, you will see a 'happy nation' that silently makes sacrifices for the construction of Shenzhen."[29]

This editorial also hinted at the extension of the meaning of *dagong* to larger categories of workers. Although this 1994 statement may be read as a euphemization and a concealment of the class-relation dimension of the very condition of rural migrant workers, it may also be conceived as an annunciator of the upheavals that were going to characterize the labor condition from the second half of the 1990s.[30]

Throughout its five years of publication, "World of *Dagong*" celebrated labor and repeated notions and values common within the Shenzhen press at the time, including the idea that *dagong* should include all forms of laborers, regardless of their *hukou* status. One of the most recurrent images it provided for migrant workers was their contribution to the economic achievements of the SEZ.[31] In these depictions, migrant workers were often labeled the "builders of the Special Zone."[32] Migrant workers' role in the city's success were also strongly expressed in phrases such as "Without these migrant workers Shenzhen would be an empty city" and "Migrant workers are the ones who have built the modern city we live in."[33]

In these accounts and descriptions, "World of *Dagong*" drew a causal link between migrant workers' efforts and sacrifices and the rewards they received in the form of successful employment mobility or the improvement of their own lives. Sometimes this reward also took the form of having a "sense of belonging" and "feeling at home" in Shenzhen. Although articles usually stated that migrant workers could not become legal permanent residents of Shenzhen, the articles stressed that migrant workers could "feel" that Shenzhen belonged to them via their contribution to the development of the SEZ and through the sense of pride that this contribution provided. Migrant workers' merit and efforts, exemplified by their "sweat," "tears," and "blood," were said to be embodied in Shenzhen's buildings, which eventually should provide them with a sense of pride and belonging and enable them overcome the pain and suffering they endured in their work.

It should be observed here that the stress in these articles on the notion of "feeling at home" was related to an official concern expressed in Shenzhen pronouncements relating to the construction of the "Shenzhen Spiritual Civilization." In 2000, for example, a municipal publication explained that there

were vast differences between the "highly qualified permanent population" and the "low quality workers from outside." At the time, Shenzhen had in an official population of four million people, among which approximately two-thirds held temporary registration permits. It was significant that these temporary workers were encouraged to "psychologically feeling at home" because they were expected to leave when their job was done.[34] "World of *Dagong*" picked up this theme, exhorting workers to use and nurture their potential skills, because "one may not have a Shenzhen 'green card,'[35] but what one can surely not fail to possess is to have ideals and aspirations, knowledge and competences, and dignity."[36]

Closely associated with the notion of merit and contribution was the conspicuous use of the historically loaded expression, "To pay with one's blood and sweat" (*fuchu xuehan*). This expression had been used during the Mao era in reference to the sent-down urbanites who were to learn from and, in return, educate peasants. These "educated youth" (*zhiqing*) had left their cities wholeheartedly, "offering their best years of youth respectfully to the country." Significantly, a collective justification that had been used to rusticate urban youth during the Mao era was redeployed in Shenzhen to legitimate the new labor regime. In a culminating tale in 1998, for example, the productivist exaltation embodied in the sacrifice of the migrant workers' youth assumed poetic and ideological form:

> The reason why the production line is so beautiful is because it is dressed up in youthfulness? These rows of youngsters sitting there are like green grass and flowers sitting along the water, they are contending vigorously [*zhengqi douyan*] with life . . . ?[37] The value of youth is flowing away smoothly along the production line. I myself am immersed in the production line, neither impulsive nor weak, my vigor is getting stronger . . . When my hands and eyes move, embracing the production line's rhythm, my heart feels so good . . . What makes me even more relieved is that, in my struggle towards the "zero fault" goal, every day, "red stars" shine on my attendance record while the red flag flitters in the wind.[38]

In this passage, specific terms related to the socialist era were reworked in support of the Reform and Opening policy. Importantly, both periods subordinated rural people to urban goals. The differences between these eras, however, illustrate how Shenzhen mediated the transformation of the Maoist labor regime. Under Mao, rural workers were socially and geographically bound to the land and had little choice but to work for the rural collectives (the socialist cooperatives and later the collectively organized popular communes), as

the whole economy was planned centrally by the party-state. Moreover, individual workers had to submit to the collective goals of the party, which was said to express the common will of the people. In contrast, during the era of the Reform and Opening policy, rural workers became mobile—migrating from hometowns to Shenzhen. In turn, through their labor, migrant workers modeled how individual goals contributed to a state-lead project of integration into global capitalism.

A Place for Dagong: This Warm Earth That Is Shenzhen

The image of Shenzhen as an environment in which a worker's potential could be realized became more pronounced by the end of the 1990s. In the local media, there was a recurrent association of the SEZ with self-determination, autonomy, and adaptability on the part of its migrant workers. These descriptions repeatedly contrasted Shenzhen and the south (referring to the PRD) from the countryside and the interior of the country.[39] The expression, "This warm earth that is Shenzhen" was widely repeated in the Shenzhen press and in *dagong* literature in order to describe the SEZ's dynamism, competition, challenges, and opportunities. The descriptions of Shenzhen were utopian, and its explicit foil was the backward and lackadaisical countryside.[40] By the 2000s, Shenzhen had become a place—at least in the public discourse—where migrant workers could nurture their dreams and aspirations and make the most of their potential.[41]

This idea of nurturing aspirations and dreams in Shenzhen was also tightly connected to an intense notion of youth.[42] For instance, in an earlier piece from February 1998, Shenzhen's skyscrapers and avenues are associated with "youthfulness, struggling and a pioneer spirit."[43] In a March 1998 *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily* text, another migrant worker nurtured the dream of being successful in Shenzhen by imagining herself and her future "as more and more magnificent," and as having to "fly conscientiously higher and further in the Shenzhen sky."[44] In short, Shenzhen was meant to attract individuals who were dissatisfied with their hometown situation. Young migrants willingly left the countryside for Shenzhen to polish their determination. Importantly, although the rhetorical link between individual effort and success similarly permeated the workplace in many factories of the Pearl River Delta,[45] in Shenzhen, writers assumed that the desire to transform oneself through migration to Shenzhen was shared across all social classes. Thus the Shenzhen press described typical migrants not only as workers from the countryside but as people with urban backgrounds, such as doctors, teachers, and older people with more education.[46]

Turning the Outside In: Lowering the Expectations among Urban Migrants

In addition to stressing the need for all migrant workers to continuously learn from experience, the rhetoric of Shenzhen as a place where people improved themselves conflated the experiences of migrants from the countryside and those from other cities, modeling appropriate attitudes for success in the SEZ. During its last year of publication, "World of *Dagong*" invited laid-off workers from state-owned industries, unemployed Shenzheners, and those facing the obstacles of "not getting highly qualified jobs and not being willing to do lower jobs" to write to the new column, "My Experience Searching Again for Work."[47] The introductory text for the column stated that workers faced issues such as "how to raise their own quality [*suzhi*] and how to change their conceptions on looking for work."[48] In these press accounts, "the interior" with which Shenzhen was contrasted no longer referred to the countryside but rather to bankrupt state-owned enterprises where workers had become redundant.

In this column, laid-off workers were encouraged to nurture an attitude that would allow them to reevaluate their position in the socioprofessional hierarchy. These texts emphasized that independent study (instead of formal education) and "learning from one's experiences" would be possible when laid-off workers and the unemployed acknowledged their deficiencies and lowered their expectations for jobs and salaries. The result of nurturing an attitude of acceptance would be "replenishment" (*chongshi* or *huibao*), which was, in fact, a new job.[49] This rhetoric suggested that at least some unemployed laid-off workers were not quite fit for Shenzhen nor were they ready to do the kinds of tasks they had previously scorned—hence the need to change one's outlook when searching for reemployment. This rhetoric portrayed laid-off workers as too narrow minded, too choosy, and not daring enough for the Shenzhen labor market. In order to successfully find a job in the SEZ, these workers needed to lower their demands and "start from scratch."[50]

The column also modeled how recent college graduates could succeed through humility and hard work. In one text, for example, a university graduate who downplayed his university degree in order to get a job as a waiter—a position clearly beneath what his education had prepared him to do—said, "Half a month later, I went to a hotel to work as waiter . . . I no longer dared to show my university diploma that had resulted from my hard work . . . During that period, as I was holding the bucket to the toilets and as I was offering subservient services to others, I held back my tears and did not think that I was a university graduate. I was just considering myself as an apprentice who did not understand anything."[51]

His new attitude paid off. The graduate was later informed that he would be appointed a group leader precisely because he had put down his university student airs and he was willing "to become a primary student again."[52] In this text, "starting from scratch" meant that a highly educated person had to reevaluate his employment expectations and be ready to start at a low rung, such as that of a waiter. In another instance, a female migrant worked in a hospital laundry without being paid a salary. She worked so fast and steadily that she was eventually rewarded with a paid job. The moral of this tale is expressed in the very last sentence of the text: "The person who can help you best is yourself."[53]

The repetition of such exemplary tales exhorted migrants to not give up searching for work, to remain self-confident, and to be ready to accept any job. The key words that emerged in the 1998–99 "World of *Dagong*" pages emphasized attitude as central to employment. These words included "to replenish oneself," "to charge one's batteries," "to know oneself again," "to find one's direction," "to look for oneself again," and "to search for one's value." Several of the 1999 texts were thinly veiled warnings addressed to state-owned enterprise workers or laid-off workers. The warning sent was clear: those who did not actively look for work and were unwilling to independently acquire new knowledge and learn new techniques would most likely be laid off or unable to find employment on the Shenzhen labor market.

The following fragments nicely illustrate the tone of these warnings:

> When you feel at a loss, don't forget: life does not believe in tears, only those strongly determined talents will manage to reach the shore of victory.[54]

> During all this period, [she] had not stopped going forward, through independent study she earned a specialized technical degree. This because she realizes that in a society of tough competition, only those who endlessly keep replenishing themselves may continuously make progress, otherwise they will be eliminated.[55]

The message sent to former state-owned enterprise workers, although not always explicitly expressed, was that everyone should be ready to lower his or her work expectations in order to adapt to the Shenzhen labor market.

The Political Work of Modeling Migrant Labor

During Shenzhen's second decade, migrant workers embodied the values of the Shenzhen Spirit, constructing an identity for the SEZ. Shenzhen's young migrant workers embodied a series of values and attitudes belonging chiefly

to two major rhetorics. The first rhetoric cited the ethics of the Mao era, such as "devoting one's whole life" and "offering a contribution" for the prosperity and economic development of the SEZ and of the country. The second rhetoric was associated with the development of commodified labor, including values such as "adaptation to competition," "self-confidence," and "autonomy."

Processes of state-making and subject-making through the figures of Chinese migrant workers share a number of commonalities with similar processes in the history of population mobility and the formation of nation-states in other parts of the world. First, Chinese internal migrants share with international migrants in other countries "a form of institutionalized discrimination," which produces a layering of statuses and citizenship, with different categories of migrants enjoying differentiated rights and duties, as well as being the object of various degrees of social control.[56]

Second, the experiences of Chinese migrant workers in Shenzhen overlap with those of (im)migrants elsewhere in the world. Practices of legal, bureaucratic, and narrative categorization have occupied a central role within the never fully completed processes of state-formation and reinvention. For instance, in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century France, the very notion of the "national citizen" was shaped in opposition to a number of "interior others" constructed as "the vagrant," "the refugee," "the destitute," or "the homeless." Concomitantly, the state defined the very attributes of what constituted a "legitimate citizen," or the "national community," in contradistinction to various categories of interior and alien others and the various forms of social ills they were associated with.[57] As empty signifiers, migrants—be they labeled "peasant workers," "illegal migrants," "undocumented workers," or "refugees"—can be loaded with specific meanings and values, enabling the sovereign and diacritic power of the state to define who belongs and who does not, who is a legitimate citizen and who is not, and what forms of labor are more or less valued. They can also enable the state to determine which forms of labor should be concealed, thereby delineating areas of state intervention.

Third, migrants may be turned into useful figures at the level of rhetoric and for their economic roles, especially in times of changes in the relationship among the party-state, capital, and other social groups. The very features that render Chinese rural migrant workers, laid-off workers, and international migrant workers elsewhere in the world attractive—their "invisibility, marginality and vulnerability"—are the same characteristics that make them "hard to control and legalize."[58] As Bach has argued in chapter 1 of this volume, in their management of rural communities, the Shenzhen authorities combine a kind of laissez-faire with periodic attempts at restoring social order, a management pattern that "enables the very migration that is simultaneously necessary and

'illegal.'" Within the political economy of both Shenzhen and many Western countries, the ambiguous and often concealed links between the "formal" and "informal," or "legal" and "illegal," ends of the economy and the roles played by various categories of migrant workers offer specific ways for the state to manage the politics of labor, making visible its sporadic sovereign affirmation of authority.[59] In Shenzhen as elsewhere, the "power of the national state sometimes seems more visible and encroaching and sometimes less effective and less relevant."[60]

Throughout the 1990s, rural migrant labor occupied an increasingly important position in the economic growth of the Shenzhen SEZ. Moreover, through the conflation of rural hometowns and state-owned enterprises, the figure of the rural migrant worker enabled Shenzhen to model lowered job expectations for urban migrants, who were represented as "starting from scratch." On the whole, the inclusion of migrant workers in the party-state rhetoric of "the Shenzhen miracle" concealed the precariousness and liminality that characterized and continues to define migrant workers' conditions and the politico-institutional arrangements that have enabled the exploitative regimes of production. Indeed, the kinds of narratives documented above constructed an image of Shenzhen that diluted the class antagonism that characterizes labor relations in Shenzhen. As Pun put it, "The language of class is subsumed so as to clear the way for a neoliberal economic discourse that emphasizes individualism, professionalism, equal opportunities, and the open market."[61] In other words, the intense cultural construction of migrant workers and of *dagong* demonstrates the party-state's ability to adapt its system of signs and symbols to the conditions of global capitalism. To do so, it must reconcile exploitative forms of labor with the party-state founding discourse and identity, as well as shape legitimate forms of relationship with its subject-categories.

During the 1990s, Shenzhen was culturally constructed as a space in which rural and urban youth might realize aspirations for social mobility. Importantly, the relative debasement of rural migrants was mobilized within the narrative of Shenzhen Spirit to both encourage rural migrants to improve their situation and discipline urban migrants for having excessive expectations. Nevertheless, many of the values related to self-reliance sponsored in 1994 in the Shenzhen official press have turned into core societal values defining social mobility in China today because the Chinese state is requiring that people from all social categories become self-reliant and find ways to provide for their own well-being—to adopt an attitude of acceptance.

In the 1990s, rural migrant workers in Shenzhen were the ideal subjects to mobilize to model these values for all migrants to the SEZ. Rural migrant

workers could be transformed into positive models of self-reliance precisely because, under the *hukou* system, they were more debased than their urban counterparts; their lives did materially improve through commodified labor because the party-state had not guaranteed food, employment, or welfare to rural people in the way it had for urbanites. In contrast, urban migrants had to be taught the precariousness of their condition. In this sense, the figure of the migrant worker as it was constructed in the Shenzhen official press should be thought of as a precursory icon crystallizing a major socioeconomic and political transformation being carried out by the post-Mao Chinese leadership—the vast commodification of labor that would to touch almost all categories of the population. Therefore, the subject of this chapter is actually the very heart of the party-state and its search for new modes of legitimization of the social hierarchy.

Notes

1. In this chapter, I do not study the ways in which these officially sponsored values and norms are reworked and negotiated by migrant workers in their everyday lives. For studies that deal with this, see Tamara Jacka, *Rural Women in Urban China: Gender, Migration and Social Change* (New York: M. E. Sharp, 2006); Wanning Sun, *Subaltern China. Rural Migrants, Media, and Cultural Practices* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014); and Eric Florence, "Migrant Workers in the Pearl River Delta: Discourse and Narratives about Work as Sites of Struggle," *Critical Asian Studies* 39, no. 1 (2006): 121–51.

2. Youwei Li, *Shenzhen jingji tequ de tansuo zhi lu* (Shenzhen: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 1995), 232–34.

3. Mary Ann O'Donnell, "The Ambiguous Possibilities of Social and Self-Transformation in Late Socialist Worlds," *Drama Review* 50, no. 4 (2006): 97.

4. Georges T. Crane, "Special Things in Special Ways: National Economic Identity and China's Special Economic Zones," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 37 (1994): 76, 83, 89.

5. Youwei Li, *Shenzhen jingji* (Shenzhen: Shenzhen Tequ Chubanshe, 1995), 231–32.

6. In this chapter, for reasons of space constraints, the analysis is limited to the exploration of positive of values that are fostered by the party within Shenzhen Spiritual Civilization work in the 1980s and 1990s, which aim at rearing Shenzhen's "the new person." But spiritual civilization also implies defining this new person or the legitimate migrant worker in opposition to the kinds of behaviors and people that are to be rejected. In Shenzhen's case, the people whose presence is undesired and unsightly are mainly the "three withouts" people.

7. This focus on spiritual civilization was actually a major way in which Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, and other CCP leaders legitimized the economic reforms in the early 1980s and 1990s. The development in the material (economic) sphere had to be checked by a continuous emphasis on "spiritual civilization," which referred to moral and social order as well as to party-state-sponsored normalizing and disciplining of the various groups of Chinese society. See Borge Bakken, *The Exemplary Society: Human Improvement, Social Control, and the Dangers of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

8. Yuange Ni, Lijun Peng, and Yuanzhang Shen, *Shenzhen: Maixiang shehuizhuyi jingji* (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1994), 234.

9. Hairong Yan, "Neo-Liberal Governmentality and Neo-Humanism: Organizing *Suzhi*/Value Flow through Labor Recruitment Networks," *Cultural Anthropology* 18, no. 4 (2003): 492.

10. Eli Friedman and Ching Kwan Lee, "Remaking the World of Chinese Labour: A 30-Year Retrospective," *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 48, no. 3 (2010): 507–33.

11. Ching Kwan Lee, "Three Patterns of Working-Class Transition in China," in *Politics in China: Moving Frontiers*, ed. Jean-Louis Rocca and Francoise Mengin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 62–92.

12. Yuen-Fong Woon, "Circulatory Mobility in Post-Mao China: Temporary Migrants in Kaiping County, Pearl River Delta Region," *International Migration Review* 27, no. 3 (1993): 578–604; Shen Tan, "The Relationship between Foreign Enterprises, Local Governments, and Women Migrant Workers in the Pearl River Delta," in *Rural Labor Flows in China*, ed. A. West Loraine and Yaohui Zhao (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 292–309. Beginning in the 1980s, with its mix of pro-investment measures and deregulation of labor, the Pearl River Delta witnessed an unprecedented parallel increase of foreign investments and rural migrant workers. From 1987 on, the population holding Shenzhen temporary household registration certificates outnumbered the permanent population by 51.8 percent, and by 1994, this proportion of temporary population had reached 72 percent. In 2004, out of a total population for Shenzhen of 5,975,000, 4,324,200 were holding a temporary registration. *Shenzhen Statistical Yearbook* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2005).

13. Chris-Chi Chan, *The Challenge of Labour in China: Strikes and the Changing Labour Regime in Global Factories* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010). Concurrently, in the face of increasingly conflicting labor relations, the party-state has developed a whole body of legislations and regulations such as the 1994 Labor Law, the much-debated 2008 Contract Law, and the Conciliation and Arbitration Law, which was also promulgated in January 2008.

14. From 1988 on, for each worker they wanted to hire, enterprises had to comply with a series of complex procedures at the District Labor Bureau in order to hire workers temporarily. The permits obtained had to be renewed on a yearly basis. Once these procedures were accomplished, the enterprises had to apply to the Public Security Bureau in order to obtain a certificate of temporary residence registration. Thereafter, the enterprises had to apply for a temporary household registration (*hukou*). Eventually they had to apply to the District Public Security Bureau for a one-year temporary residence certificate. Pun Ngai, *Made in China: Women Factory Workers in a Global Workplace* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

15. By "routine repression," Scott referred not to outright use of force—or even the memory of massacres or stormy repressions that peasants would still retain fresh memory of—but to "the steady pressure of everyday repression backed by occasional arrests, warnings, diligent police work, [and] legal restrictions." In most Chinese cities, each category of rural migrants has been subjected to differentiated degrees of state intervention, both formal and informal, in spheres of residence, employment, reproductive practices, and so on. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 274.

16. Robin Cohen, *The New Heliots: Migrants in the International Division of Labour* (Gower: Aldershot, 1988), 20.

17. The newspapers under scrutiny in this chapter are all linked institutionally to Shenzhen authorities and are all under the supervision of the party propaganda department. The *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily* (*Shenzhen Tequbao*; hereafter STQB) is under the direct control of the Shenzhen municipal authorities; the *Evening of Shenzhen* (*Shenzhen Wanbao*; hereafter SWB) is linked to the latter paper but targets a more popular audience, while the *Shenzhen Legality Daily* (*Shenzhen Fazhibao*; hereafter SFB) is linked to and intended for Shenzhen administrations of

justice and public security. All articles relating to migrant workers in these newspapers for the years 1989, 1990, 1994, and 1998–99 have been systematically analyzed (January, February, March and August for each year).

18. Delia Devin, *Internal Migration in Contemporary China* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Eric Florence, "Migrant Workers in the Pearl River Delta: Discourse and Narratives about Work as Sites of Struggle," *Critical Asian Studies* 39, no. 1 (2007): 120–50.

19. From the middle of the 1990s on, there has been an increase in the number of such magazines in China. Some of these magazines may be linked to mainstream newspapers or to government or party authorities while others may not have such straightforward institutional links. One should also distinguish between magazines that are officially registered and those that are not. This distinction may be of importance, since it may imply a different editing process—that is, officially registered magazines are likely to entail a more constraining ideological editing process.

20. The first of these writers is Anzi. In 1987, she started writing in the *Special Zone Culture* magazine. Her first book, *The Resting Post of Youth: The True Story of a Shenzhen Female Workers*, was published in 1991. In 1992 she started to work for the Shenzhen propaganda department.

21. See O'Donnell, "The Ambiguous Possibilities," 96–119. The need for the preservation of the quality of the environment for investors was actually stressed very recurrently in Shenzhen's official newspapers' accounts of the cleansing campaigns aimed at the unwanted rural migrants, the "three withouts." This also enabled the local party-state to present an image of itself as capable of preserving such an environment. Ann Anagnost makes such an argument in her work on "the quality of the population." For her, the whole teleological discourse on "civility" (*wenming*) and on the low quality of the rural population, which is located on a line from backwardness to civility, provides the Party with a justification for its role as the entity that can help the rural masses move toward civility and raise their quality. Ann Anagnost, *National Past-Times: Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

22. Dorothy Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

23. Constance Clark, "The Politics of Place Making in Shenzhen, China," *Berkeley Planning Journal* 4 (1998): 104.

24. Clark, "Politics of Place Making," 103–25. See Bach, chapter 7 of this volume, for a similar characterization of a complex and "contradictory, even cacophonous" identity for Shenzhen, which is actually both urban and rural.

25. Clark, "Politics of Place Making," 238–39.

26. See O'Donnell, chapter 2 of this volume.

27. We may consider that in post-Mao China, in the background of social comments on the social hierarchy, there stands a strong criticism of Maoist society "as a means of radical disengagement from Maoist socialism." Lisa Rofel argues, "Economic reform is also and most significantly a space of imagination." Lisa Rofel, *Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China after Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 29, 98.

28. Ching Kwan Lee, *Against the Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 204–6. *Dagong* means the kind of work performed by rural migrant workers, which often entails highly intense regimes of production and various degrees of exploitation. The term has slowly been used to include wider sectors of laborers and employees.

29. *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, January 7, 1994, 6.

30. It is worth noting that most of the migrant workers I interviewed from 1999 to 2010 in the Pearl River Delta clearly expressed that they wanted to be distinguished from the "white

collars" and that their work was characterized by its painful and unstable character. Some of them actually said they ought to be called the "black collars." Fieldwork notes, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010.

31. See, for example, *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, January 1, 1994, 6; *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, January 14, 1994, 6; *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, January 28, 1994, 6; *Shenzhen Evening Daily*, February 13, 1994, 3; *Shenzhen Evening Daily*, February 21, 1994, 1; and *Guangzhou Ribao*, February 4, 1994, 1.

32. The term "builder of the zone" was used to oppose the term "gold diggers" in the debates on the values of Shenzhen society that ensued within the "Shekou storm." O'Donnell highlights that Shenzhen University's former president Luo Zhengqi viewed participation in the construction of buildings as expressing patriotism and self-sacrifice and said that it was "the highest expression of intellectual life." See O'Donnell, chapter 2 of this volume.

33. See *Shenzhen Evening Daily*, February 2, 1994, 3; and *Shenzhen Evening Daily*, March 29, 1998, 6 for other illustrations.

34. Wu Zhong et al., *Zouxiang xiandaihua: Shenzhen 20 nian tansuo* (Shenzhen: Haitian chubanshe, 2000). Furthermore, in the same publication, it is added that considering how to solve the problems of education and management of this rural migrant population is another important issue for Shenzhen municipality cadres: As "so many of the workers from outside have a rather low quality, in an environment of fierce competition, they often are under heavy psychological pressure. Therefore, what most of them need, it is explained, is spiritual consolation." If they were to lack such consolation or provision of comfort, it is stated, they "could easily try to get support from religious or even all kinds of small informal organizations."

35. The use of this expression actually refers to the possibility for those who could afford it to buy a Shenzhen household registration, referred to in the 1990s as "blue *hukou*." The use of the term "green card" in this article is awkward but may be related to Shenzhen's fascination with the United States in the early years as an "immigrant city."

36. *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, March 8, 1998, 9.

37. This phrasing may be derived from the well-known expression "Let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred school of thought contend" (*baihua qifang, baijia zhengming*), or "Let a hundred flowers blossom, weed through the old to bring the new" (*baihua qifang, tuichen chuxin*), used by Mao during the One Hundred Flowers campaign (1957), which itself came from the Warring Kingdoms period (403–221 BC).

38. *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, March 8, 1998, 6.

39. See Bach, chapter 7 of this volume, on the narrative construction of Shenzhen as based on the opposition of urban and rural.

40. Yan makes the argument that as the countryside is discursively constructed as a space of lower value for economic development, it is often depicted as space of death by rural people. Yan Hairong, *New Masters, New Servants: Migration, Development, and Women Workers in China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). It is actually interesting to note that as migration to the cities increases, the countryside becomes closely associated with the sheer impossibility of achieving one's plan of personal emancipation.

41. See Winnie Wong, chapter 9 in this volume.

42. See Xia Guang, *Shenzhen yekong bu jimo* (Shenzhen: Haitian chubanshe, 1999), 1–47, for illustrations of this association of Shenzhen with youth. This volume is a selection of transcripts of a radio program in which a female journalist replies to the queries of people who are living in Shenzhen.

43. *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, February 15, 1998, 6.

44. *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, March 8, 1998, 6.

45. I draw this insight from Pun Ngai, who wrote that the female migrant workers were the object of the triple oppression of "global capitalism, state socialism, and familial patriarchy." Pun, *Made in China*, 4. According to the evidence provided by a Foxconn 2010 study carried out in several Foxconn plants, slogans such as "Run towards the magnificent dream," "To suffer is the basis for richness," and "You will extend your dream from here to your future" were placed on the walls of the plant. Foxconn, "Liang an gao xiao diaocha yanjiu baogao," unpublished report, 2010. I develop this argument further through an analysis of migrant workers' rationale of why they left their village in Eric Florence, *Struggling around Dagong: Discourses about and by Rural Migrant Workers in the Pearl River Delta* (PhD dissertation, University of Liege, 2008), http://hdl.handle.net/2268/109931.

46. See Mason, chapter 10 in this volume.

47. On how laid-off workers are represented in Beijing tabloids, see Zhao Yuezhi, "The Rich, the Laid-off and the Criminal in Tabloid Tales: Read All about It!," in *Unofficial China: Popular Culture and Thought in the People's Republic*, ed. Perry Link and Richard Madsen (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002), 111–35.

48. *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, March 15, 1998, 6.

49. *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, February 15, 1998, 6; *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, March 8, 1998, 6; *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, January 17, 1999, 6; March 28, 1999, 6.

50. *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, January 31, 1999, 6.

51. *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, March 28, 1999, 6.

52. *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, March 28, 1999, 6.

53. *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, March 28, 1999, 6.

54. *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, January 31, 1999, 6.

55. *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, March 28, 1999, 6. On this March 28 page, three articles conveyed a very similar kind of warning.

56. Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship*, 7.

57. Gerard Noiriel, *Etat, nation et immigration: Vers une histoire du pouvoir* (Paris: Belin, 2001), 201.

58. Kitty Calavita, "Italy and New Immigration," in *Controlling Immigration*, ed. Wayne Cornelius, Philip Martin, and James Hollifield (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 319.

59. It is a well-known fact, for instance, that an important informal sector developed in Shenzhen within the segmented labor market at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. Many of the people who were part of the "illegal" segment of this workforce (the "three without people") were part of this informal sector. According to Liu, for the Township and Village Enterprises of the two major industrial districts of Bao'an and Longgang, only 50 percent of the migrant workers in factories had applied for temporary registration, most of whom represented a major component of the "economic prosperity of the city." Liu Kaiming, *Bianyuan ren: Migrant Labor in South China* (Beijing: Xinhua Chubanshe, 2003), 62–63.

60. Michael R. Trouillot, "The Anthropology of the State in the Age of Globalization," *Current Anthropology* 42, no. 1 (2001): 126.

61. Pun, *Made in China*, 11.