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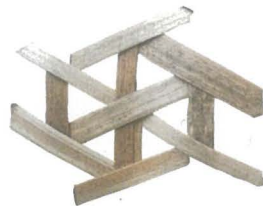
2016

Gabriele

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Network

Bridging



NETWORK BRIDGING

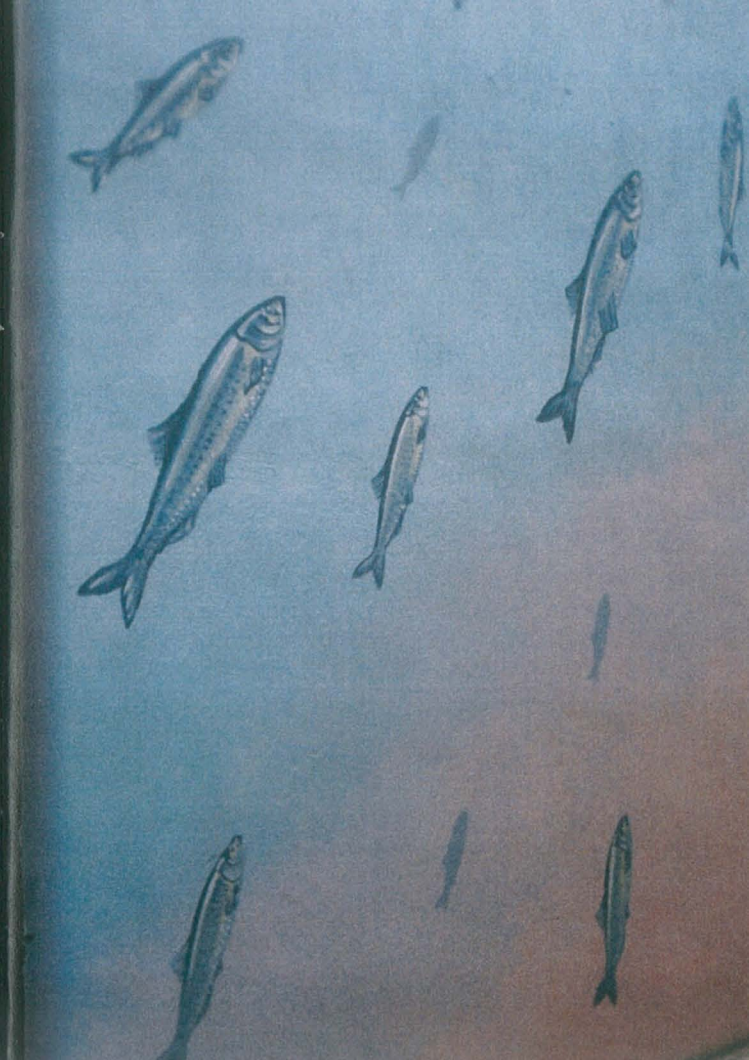
This booklet is one of the many media through which I tried to organize memories and images I collected around Xianqiao Village between May and July 2016. When I arrived at Tiangeng House I had many ideas about what I could do during my residency period. I wanted to map the networks of people, the flows of goods and the circulation of imaginations between Chongming Island and the city of Shanghai. As the days passed, I realized that it was more interesting to just walk around Xianqiao with an audio recorder or a camera or a booklet, talk to the people who wanted to talk to me, or simply enjoy the sun setting over the fields. The Chongming countryside is a web of networks: roads, waterways, bus routes, telecom cables, power lines, military jet flight paths, tilled fields. Xianqiao Village takes its name from the Xianqiao Bridge, or Bridge of the Immortal. Similar yellow arches and smaller concrete bridges connect roads to fields, houses to backyards, village to village. The purposely vague idea of network bridging emerged as the dominant metaphor guiding my purposeless walks around Xianqiao. The photos and fieldnote excerpts contained in this booklet are just what they seem: a partial mapping, a failed documentary.



UNTIDY IMPLICATIONS

There's an extremely sticky quote I remember from my university readings (it might not be accurate) about how ethnography is about, ultimately and unavoidably, "being untidily implicated in the lives of the people you work with." The sentence, in its original formulation, appears in one essay by Mark Hobart (I don't remember which), a British anthropologist whose work has been really influential in my academic formation. I have always been attracted and stricken by the frugal honesty of this definition, one which avoids all epistemological and ontological pretenses of scientific accuracy or phenomenological empathy, and instead cuts down to the heart of a discipline: doing research with people means being there and having things happen to you and around you because you are there. Yet, I have never felt the strength of this sentence until I broke Elsa's finger. Elsa: I'm sorry. When I arrived at Tiangeng house with Huang Yi I was quite tired and half-sunburnt after a hour-long bus ride and my first walk around Xianqiao. I saw the outlines of you girls sitting at the kitchen table, shadows against the bright light coming in from the backdoor. I am a socially slow person. I said hello to your sun-contoured figures and followed Huang Yi to sit in the backyard and talk while waiting for you to be ready and go to check out the exhibition space. I had briefly met Jane earlier, but I had no idea about who was who, and who was doing what. I forget names and birthdays extremely quickly. I got even more sunburned on the rocking chair in the courtyard until it was about time for Huang Yi to leave.

When it was time to leave I had a few seconds of complete, total agency, in which I could decide if I wanted to grab my bag and follow you out of the door, or instead inform you that I'd rather stay home and rest. I thought that, being this my first day in Xianqiao, I should take it all in. A few minutes later, I asked you a question I don't remember, because at the time I was just making conversation, and if I had known that the metal pipe you were sitting in was about to collapse and send you tumbling on the jagged edge of a concrete floor, I wouldn't have asked that useless question and you wouldn't have sat on the pipe that way, that long, without noticing its instability and you would have enjoyed the following two weeks in an alternative timeline in which you hadn't broken your finger. But I did ask you that question. And you just went down, backways, into the maize field, and I thought that something weird was happening, and the metal tube clanked against other metal tubes, and everybody's face was perplexed, and you just lay there on your back, hands stretched, as we all realized what just happened. It must have hurt really badly. I hoped your phone was ok. For some reason, I felt that your fall was entirely my responsibility. Implications are untidy. Being around each other is a constant process of getting more and more untidy and cleaning up. Getting dishes dirty and washing them for each other. It's also the basis on which I do what I do: collect stuff and put it back together; experience, recall, compose; make decisions, follow them through, trace their weird ripples. It was great to meet you all.





MICRO-COMMERCE

Hey, what is this stuff you are selling here on WeChat?
I don't understand

Male health products
I have never used them before, what are they for?

To balance your health
I see... a lot of guys here with these problems?

Not all of them
So how's your business?

Normal
I didn't know you could sell things on WeChat...

This is *weishang* (micro-commerce), it's very popular now
I see

Are you in Qidong?
No, why?

Then how did you add me on WeChat?
I'm in Chongming, is it near there?

Oh yes, we have been to Chongming as well
So selling these products is your full-time job?

No, I have a day job, this is part-time
So your full-time job is also related to these products?

No, it isn't
Then how did you get into selling these?

My *jiejie* (cousin) was selling them so I followed her
So if I wanted to buy something from you, what would you suggest?

If your health is ok, you don't need anything... but if you
want to support my business, you can buy a couple of
bottles of Immortal's Pills, hehe







JULY MOBILITIES

The atmosphere in Xianqiao in July is different from a few months before - there are more people around, mostly kids and grandmas moving around town, people speeding around on scooters with their heads wrapped in clothes or colorful towels to mitigate the heat. Daxinzhen, the closest town, is just two bus stops away and feels "just like a Chinese town, this is not Shanghai", in the words of a middle-aged man who offers me a car ride.

The bus timetable, with rides every forty-five minutes or so, is one of the few public maps of local everyday life: some stops exist only on demand, like the one created by the guy who just stood in front of the speeding bus to make sure it stopped and let him come aboard - there aren't that many rides, so better be safe than sorry. Chained routes of bus exchanges link the island to Shanghai's subway network, a long-winded alternative to driving private cars - local license plates do not apparently allow to enter the urban area, cutting Chongming residents away from their offspring living in the city.

People sit in the shadow of their storefronts or wait for the bus to ride back home after buying groceries at the fresh market. "My son got married with a *waidiren*, I stopped talking to him already", comments a grandma. "Aya, you shouldn't, *waidi* or *neidi* there are good and bad people everywhere... our kids, they are grown-ups already, what they do has nothing to do with us..." "But this *waidiren* he found is a bad one, he went somewhere outside Shanghai with her to open a wonton shop, I stopped talking to him already, I can't accept it."





BLACK TAXI

"Are you... it's you, right? I'm the same guy who gave you a lift the other day, I can give you a lift today as well! Where are you going?"

"Going to Daxinzhen, to the supermarket... is it ok?"

"Sure, come in"

"You're the Italian guy of the other day, with the two girls, where are they? They left? Now it's just you?"

"Yes, it's just me... do you drive around like this every day?"

"No no no, I don't, it must have been *yuanfen* for us to meet again, don't be so polite, I'll give you a lift. Which supermarket do you want to go? The one right down the road? Ok. It's so stuffy now... in Italy is also hot, but it's different: here is humid, there is dry. I know because I've been there. I liked it, but I just didn't like eating raw stuff, you eat raw meat, that's why you have so many hair on your body. That must be it!"

"I guess so, yeah..."

"When I went to Italy in 1985 it looked pretty much like here, am I right?"

"I think so, must have been similar in the countryside"

"I remember when I went to Italy they already had supermarkets though, here we didn't have them back then"

"Yes, I think we had supermarkets in the 60s already"

"Right... here we go, here's the supermarket. Take your time, take your time. Gonna buy any alcohol?"

"No, it's too hot... I need to buy some vegetables"

"They don't have vegetables here, I can drive you to the fresh market when you're done, it's ok."







必须系安全带



- 听取当地导游讲解
- 游客应根据实际情况选择游玩项目
- 在水上（包括游船）游玩时，应穿戴救生衣
- 乘坐旅游观光车时，应系好安全带
- 游玩期间游客应遵守景区规定，不得擅自进入未开放区域
- 游玩期间，应注意安全。
- 游玩期间，不得擅自离队

XI-LE-WEN

"My English name is Sissi. Which one of my songs made the strongest impression on you?" she asks. "I am Cilemon," I reply: "Why did you choose this name?" "Xi is from *Xifang*, The West, *le* is from *kuaile* and *yinyue*, happiness and music, *wen* is from *tuwen*, pictorial writing", she replies. "How did you start doing music?" She sends a long voice message: "I loved music since I was a child, I remember that when I was 3 or 4 year-old, my dad would sing songs to me; then I went to Shanghai to attend elementary school, and I remember my neighbor, one floor upstairs, I remember this very clearly - she is still in my WeChat - her mom was studying the harmonica, and I always wanted to study music but my family couldn't afford it, music for me has always been a dream. Then I started working, and so I only had my own skills, and I started buying instruments, studying music, and so on. At the time, I really liked going to the KTV singing with friends, but then I felt that... after a while I felt that singing at the KTV wasn't anything special, that it wouldn't lead to anything, but I always kept this habit of singing. Then I realized that there was Weibo, WeChat and things like these and I started singing and putting these videos online... but I always liked music, I think my music has a lot of *yuanfen*, from the very first moment that I came in contact with it, I liked it. So my artist name is Cilemon, but the name I'm using now is Sissi, do you know the Austrian princess Sissi? Her birthday is on the same day of mine, and I discovered that a lot of her hobbies are very similar to mine... she likes music, she likes pets, she likes nature... I'm also like this."



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