

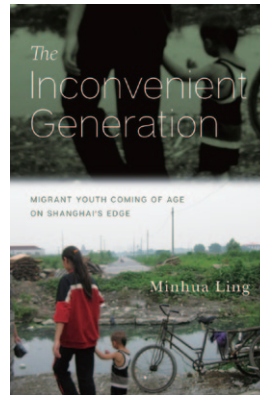
However, the volume's broad historical coverage and the specificity of its case studies constitute at the same time its drawback. Because the focus is extremely broad, the book lacks a larger analytical framework that would link the chapters together and allow them to conceptually interact with each other. Part of the reason for this lies in the fact that no common definition of corruption is used. While the editors in the introduction refer to the work of Lü Xiaobo (2000) and argue that "any activity, no matter how trivial it is, could be corruption so long as it breaks the existing norms and laws" (p. xii), Yang Zhiguo (Chapter Five) refers to the definition of corruption as the "use of public office for private advantage" (p. 134). On the contrary, Hou Xiaojia (Chapter Six) identifies a "variety of forms of political corruptions" (p. 156) one of which is "the CCP's long trend of making arbitrary decisions regardless of local customs" (*ibid.*). While all these activities can obviously be subsumed as breaking existing norms and laws, this variety of definitions and the fact that they are often not explicitly spelled out poses an analytical challenge. Therefore, the broad historical focus and the rather specific case studies, while interesting on an empirical and descriptive level, prove to be a challenge for analytical coherence and leave the chapters somehow unconnected.

Thus, this book is a good read for historians and social scientists who are interested in a broad historical lens on corruption in China and in new empirical data from different historical periods. It can provide a starting point for further research on corruption throughout Chinese history. However, in order to engage in meaningful comparisons, such research would also have to think more conceptually about this issue.

■ Carolin Kautz (M.A.) is Lecturer and Research Fellow at the Department of East Asian Studies at Goettingen University. Georg-August University Goettingen, Department of East Asian Studies, Heinrich-Dueker-Weg 14, 37073 Goettingen, Germany (carolin.kautz@phil.uni-goettingen.de).

References

LÜ, Xiaobo. 2000. *Cadres and Corruption: The Organizational Involvement of the Chinese Communist Party*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.



LING, Minhua. 2019. *The Inconvenient Generation: Migrant Youth Coming of Age on Shanghai's Edge*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

CAMILLE SALGUES

The Inconvenient Generation paints the portrait of the children of internal migrants (*nongmingong* 農民工) in the period between their secondary education and the start of their working lives. The focus of much concern, this second generation has not yet been the subject of an in-depth study, so this book fills an important gap. In terms of methodology, access to the respondents was obtained through admission to a middle school in Pudong and an NGO in Shanghai. However, although the school enters directly into the perimeter of observation, we learn nothing of what happens within the NGO, despite the obvious importance it has in the life of several of the respondents – a choice that at least deserves to be explained and discussed. The book is made up of seven chapters that offer a wide-ranging overview: habitat, demography, secondary education, the vocational schools these young migrants are channelled into, the problematic choice involved in leaving for their parents' home province to continue their studies, their consumer practices, and lastly, the problems that occur if they wish to remain in Shanghai. We must also welcome the clear and useful appendixes (biographies of the respondents, chronology, glossary of Chinese terms, and the index).

Striking for the reader is the breadth of the investigation both in time (contacts extending over ten years resulting in exceptionally detailed biographical tracking of the respondents) and in the social space. A wealth of material is enlisted: ethnographic scenes (such as a remarkable passage in which the author reveals the construction of educational disqualification, p. 81), photos, group discussions, and public controversies (p. 61). To integrate this material, a wide variety of scientific literature has been used, ranging from urbanistic debates over the people's appropriation of the city (p. 41, 53), to the sociology of labour in China and a critique of student exploitation (p. 183), including the social struggles surrounding family planning (p. 59). The author rightly describes these "second generation" children as occupying a "liminal" space (p. 12) where "new subjectivities" are being constructed (p. 203) half-way between the big names of brash consumerism and the toughest of exploitative workshops. Hence, the book is not only essential reading for those interested in the *nongmingong* or Chinese youth, but may also be read as a depiction of contemporary China, since it sheds light on the whole of society and its transformations, and therefore might be likened to the analyses of Abdelmalek Sayad (1991) in France on immigration as a "total social fact."

The introduction's placing of Chinese "politics of citizenship" in relation to the situation elsewhere, echoed in the conclusion by a "right to the city" (Harvey) that in reality always favours one population at the expense of another (p. 199), is a high point in the book (p. 10). However, this issue is immediately absorbed into another, familiar in studies on China through work such as that of Solinger (1999) or of Chloé Froissart (2013) in France: that of the state mechanisms of a repressive Chinese power and discourse that converge to oppress and stigmatise the *nongmingong*. One might say of this narrative thread, present to a greater or lesser extent depending on the chapters, what Greenhalgh (2010: 2) said of another "master narrative" concerning the Chinese state (this time, that of the imposition of the one-child policy); not necessarily false, but neither the only true narrative nor the most interesting one.

Above all, because this fixed narrative thread takes as a given the discursive construction of the migrant as "the inferior Other" (p. 56) – a theme that is present throughout the book whilst never directly constituting the subject of its research – it seems to consider as meaningless and without effect the changes in the discourse of the Chinese media between the time when the "flood" of migrations was barely tolerated and the current age of "segmented inclusion" (p. 9), to use the author's extremely useful chronological categories. It is as though the compassionate presentation of deserving and suffering *nongmingong*, omnipresent in the media at the time when the author was carrying out her studies, was just a ploy, and that only the open forms of rejection and disdain, which certainly persist, tell the truth about the Chinese discourse.

In the last chapter, for example, the author relates an intriguing scene (p. 195): Jiawen, a respondent, tells other young migrants about his appearance on a TV reality show. To attract the sympathy of the viewers, he was advised to say, "crying while smiling," that his family were working terribly hard in the hope of buying an apartment in Shanghai so that the two children could continue their education. He did not recognise himself in this tale of misery, but "it doesn't matter," the producer told him, "you don't need to mean it; you just need to say it." At this point, Jiawen and the other young migrants to whom he is telling the story burst out laughing. The author interprets this laugh only as the confirmation of the impossibility of buying an apartment in Shanghai. She does not see the troubling proximity between the story imagined by the producer and mocked by Jiawen, and the narrative she herself suggests immediately after: Jiawen's fight to live in Shanghai, his mother's hard effort to buy a house in their home village, the restrictions that he must place upon himself to allow his younger brother to continue his studies, the apartment that they will therefore never be able to buy in that city (p. 195-6). As a result, the questions that the proximity between the two stories raise do not find their place in the narrative of the oppression of migrants. This thread in effect never ceases to reactivate the implicit division, concerning the *nongmingong*, between knowledge – the social sciences embodied in a 95% Anglophone bibliography – and the discourse, a combination of manipulation and prejudices expressed by the media and the Chinese public. But this division is impossible to maintain: the same sentiments, the same ideas, even the same authors can be found on both sides. And one cannot help but wonder if the researcher could not have extended her considerations, in a reflexive gesture, to that well-worn "master narrative" of oppressed migrants. The analysis would doubtless have lost none of its qualities – its ambition, depth, or even its political force.

■ Translated by Elizabeth Guill.

■ Camille Salgues is a post-doctoral researcher in geography at the South China Normal University, 510006 Guangzhou, China (camillesalgues@hotmail.com).

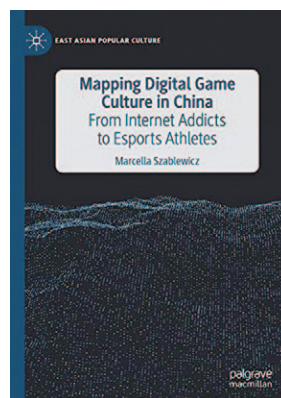
References

FROISSART, Chloé. 2013. *La Chine et ses migrants : la conquête d'une citoyenneté* (China and its Migrants: Conquering Citizenship). Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes.

GREENHALGH, Susan. 2010. *Cultivating Global Citizens: Population in the Rise of China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

SAYAD, Abdelmalek. 1991. *L'immigration ou les paradoxes de l'altérité* (Immigration or the Paradoxes of Alterity). Brussels: De Boeck-Wesmael.

SOLINGER, Dorothy J. 1999. *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market*. Berkeley: University of California Press.



SZABLEWICZ, Marcella. 2020.
Mapping Digital Game Culture in China: From Internet Addicts to Esports Athletes.
London: Palgrave Macmillan.

GE ZHANG

As its title suggests, *Mapping Digital Game Culture in China* is an ambitious book that tells a story of Chinese gamers via "a situational analysis" (p. 14) of "social relations, imaginaries and discourses that flow through and around digital games, not about the games themselves" (p. 168). Although this topographical view reproduces perspectives and themes that are not too original in themselves, as other scholars have dealt with them, it does come with a distinctive personal trajectory, as the author did fieldwork in China throughout the last decade. The book is a sustained asymmetry of vignettes, anecdotes, interviews, participant observation of events and spaces, microhistories of spatial transformations, discourse/textual analyses of media coverage, online videos, memes, and so forth. The book by no means attempts to