Panhandling and the Contestation of Public Space in Guangzhou

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ABSTRACT: Urban public space is a product of contestations by various actors. This paper focuses on the conflict between local level government and beggars to address the questions: How and why do government actors refuse or allow beggars access to public space? How and why do beggars appropriate public space to receive alms and adapt their strategies? How does this contestation contribute to the trends of urban public space in today's China? Taking the Southern metropolis of Guangzhou as a case study, I argue that beggars contest expulsion from public space through begging performances. Rising barriers of public space require higher investment in these performances, taking even more resources from the panhandling poor. The trends of public order are not unidirectional, however. Beggars navigate between several contextual borders composed by China's religious renaissance; the discourse on deserving, undeserving, and dangerous beggars; and the moral legitimacy of the government versus the imagination of a successful, "modern," and "civilised" city. This conflict shows the everyday production of "spaces of representation" by government actors on the micro level where economic incentives merge with aspirations for political prestige.

KEYWORDS: China, city, contestation, public space, public order, begging, panhandling, marginalisation, Guangzhou.

Introduction

Since the reform and open-door policy began in 1978, China's cities have witnessed increasing wealth and inequality as two sides of the same coin. Scholars agree on the interrelation of new market-economic elements amplified by China's integration into the world and the transformation of once socialist institutions yielding a "new urban poverty." [1] However, except for studies on pre-communist times, [2] research on beggars [3] in contemporary China is still in the preliminary stages. Dorothy Solinger and Eric Henry stress the exclusion of rural migrants from the country's economic ascendancy and how they resort to informal activities such as panhandling. [4] Chinese discussions concentrate on management aspects, with questions on the efficiency of the governmental relief system, legal regulations, illegal panhandling organisations, and the involvement of child abuse. [5] Rare empirical data is often gained through or in cooperation with the governmental Rescue Stations responsible for beggars or considering their point of view. [6]

This study benefits from the insights and quantitative data of preceding research to complement its own results. However, the following analysis will depart from the perspective on beggars as mere victims or disruptive factors of China's reforms. In contrast to looking at poverty as a fix living situation, I focus on both dynamic mechanisms of exclusion and related contestation, not only explaining higher-level rationales but also the active strategies of beggars in everyday life. In this context, I emphasise the significance of space. Asking for alms in a deserted place does not make much sense; beggars depend on "publicness" not only for their own access but also to meet numerous possible almsgivers. As public space is the most important economic resource for surviving by panhandling, my focus lies on the respective conflict between beggars and local government actors. The main questions are: How and why do government actors refuse or allow beggars access to public space? How and why do beggars appropriate public space to receive alms and adapt their strategies? Furthermore, I will put this example of contestation into the wider context of urban public space in contemporary China. The metropolis of Guangzhou – a vanguard of reform and urban development in the South – is presented as a case study.

Urban public space is a space where people come together; a space of social communication, visibility, and encounter. Although often defined by its openness and accessibility, [7] "public space is always and inescapably a prod-

1. Fulong Wu et al., *Urban Poverty in China*, Cheltenham, Elgar, 2010.
2. For example on imperial times: Cen Dali et al., *Zhongguo gudai de qigai* (Beggars in Ancient China), Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1995; On republican times: Lu Hanchao, *Street Criers: A Cultural History of Chinese Beggars*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2005; Zwia Lipkin, "Keeping up Appearance: The Nanjing Municipal Government and the City's Elements Déclassé, 1927-1937," doctoral thesis, Stanford University, 2001; Janet Yi-Chun Chen, *Guilty of Indigence: The Urban Poor in China, 1900-1949*, doctoral thesis, Yale University, 2005; rare work on early communist times: Aminda M. Smith, *Reeducating the People: The Chinese Communists and the 'Thought Reform' of Beggars, Prostitutes, and other 'Parasites,'* doctoral thesis, Princeton University, 2006; on Taiwan in the 1970s: David C. Schak, *A Chinese Beggars' Den: Poverty and Mobility in an Underclass Community*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988.
3. In the following, "panhandler" and "beggar" will be used interchangeably.
4. Dorothy Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999; Eric Henry, "The Beggar's Play: Poverty, Coercion, and Performance in Shenyang, China," *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 82, No. 1, 2009, pp. 7-36.
5. See articles with the keywords "*qitao*" (panhandling) or "*qigai*" (panhandler) as a keyword or main theme in the catalogues of www.cqvip.com and www.cnki.com (accessed in early October 2013).
6. Tang Xiujuan, "Guangzhou liulang qitao renyuan shengcun zhuangkuang diaocha" (Survey on the living conditions of vagrants and beggars in Guangzhou), *Zhongguo Shehui Baozhang*, No. 4, 2007, pp. 68-69; Wang Baoqing et al., "Dangqian woguo shehui qitao xianxiang de diaocha yu sikao" (Survey and deliberations on contemporary China's phenomenon of beggars), *Hunan Shifan Daxue Shehui Kexuebao*, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 13-18, 22; Chen Wei, *Dangdai Zhongguo liulang qitao jiuzhu zhidu yanjiu* (Research on the System of helping vagrants and beggars in modern China), Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe, 2007.
7. Setha Low et al. (eds), *The Politics of Public Space*, London, Routledge, 2006; Stephen Carr et al., *Public Space*, Cambridge i.a., Cambridge University Press, 1992.

uct of social negotiation and contest." [8] In transforming China, local governments strongly influence its construction and governance. With policies, propaganda, and personnel, they try to determine access, usage, and behaviour to gain political and economic profits. At the same time, panhandlers depend on popular and visible places for daily survival, challenging the government's version of an ideal public space. According to Henri Lefebvre, this conflict reflects the two modes of socially producing space: domination and control to create "spaces of representation" reflecting and strengthening the power of elites versus "appropriation" and practices of everyday life serving the needs of various social groups. [9] Appropriation refers to the continued interaction between human and space. Individuals or social groups gain material/financial, social/psychological, cultural, or political resources [10] while (re)creating, changing, and adding to the multiple socio-spatial meanings and the plurality of space. [11] Beggars appropriate space through acts of begging, which according to David Schak "is to ask someone for food or money as charity or with no serious intention of repaying it." [12] Moreover, they resort to a "panhandling repertoire" [13] consisting of contact initiation and strategies to avoid punishment. [14] Bertolt Brecht most famously pointed out the necessity that "the poorest among the poor may acquire the sort of appearance that [can] still touch the more and more hardening hearts." [15] In this paper, begging acts are considered as performances of authenticity and deservingness. Such acts differentiate from other forms of street performances as they focus on evoking compassion.

I argue that panhandlers answer the threat of expulsion through performances and actively participate in the social creation of public space. Whereas absolute exclusion is rare, rising barriers require higher investments in these performances, taking even more resources from the panhandling poor. The trends of public order are not unidirectional, however. Beggars navigate between several contextual borders composed by China's religious renaissance; the discourse on deserving, undeserving, and dangerous beggars; and the moral legitimacy of the government versus the imagination of a successful, "modern," and "civilised" city. This conflict shows the everyday production of "spaces of representation" by government actors on the micro level where economic incentives merge with aspirations for political prestige.

Methodology

The focus of the fieldwork relied on two different sites in four districts in Guangzhou (Yuexiu, Liwan, Haizhu, and Huangpu): a) public space at religious institutions including temples and churches, and at special events such as temple fairs; b) areas of consumption and leisure-time activities such as shopping streets. Both sites attract the highest number of beggars and show contestation strategies most clearly. The data are derived from non-participant observation and 27 qualitative, semi-structured interviews conducted with 22 beggars during November 2011, May/August/September 2012, and January to March 2013. With ages ranging from 20 to 70 years, four cases were female, and all but one were rural migrants. Furthermore, 24 pictures of posters and street writings of (unknown) beggars were taken during the same time frame.

Fieldwork on panhandling and public order is challenged by the sensitivity of the topic and the approachability of panhandlers. To gain their trust and to support a relaxed atmosphere, I conducted interviews in a familiar environment, and did not record but took notes right after the encounter. The semi-structured questions were open for longer or shorter narrations. Furthermore, contacts with representatives of governmental organisations were limited to lower level security personnel. Additionally, I conversed with monks and nuns, trash collectors, fortune tellers, and "vagrants" (people without a defined occupation) as they dealt with beggars or had been treated similarly (altogether 13 interviews). [16] This qualitative material was complemented with further written sources in Chinese such as official reports, regulations and announcements, newspaper articles, and academic publications.

Public space in urban China

Is public space in China increasing or decreasing? In this academic discussion, the answers depend on the point of comparison – the communist past or capitalist present. On the one hand, political domination over everyday life was reduced in the course of opening and reforming the country. The increase of individual free time, average income, urban anonymity, diversification of lifestyles, and self-expression have together built the demand for more green space and parks, pedestrian streets and open squares, enjoying outdoor catering, singing, sports, arts, etc. Zhang Guanzeng and others highlight the pluralisation of public space for consumption, culture, and leisure time. They satisfied the needs of citizens, [17] offered chances for socialising, for the development of urban identity and civil society (with Chinese characteristics). [18]

On the other hand, public space is an important economic resource in the process of urban development. Following the logic of neoliberalism, developers, and investors, entrepreneurial local governments push for privatisation and commercialisation. [19] Besides improving retail profits, public places may also enhance the image and worth of real estate objects and the city in general. More than mere aesthetics, they are used to display prosperity, modernity, and international sophistication to win over future investors and

8. Don Mitchell, "The End of Public Space? People's Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 85, No. 1, 1995, p. 131.
9. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Wiley-Blackwell, 1991; David Harvey, "Flexible Accumulation Through Urbanisation: Reflections on 'post-Modernism' in the American City," *Antipode*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1987, pp. 260-286.
10. Carl-Friedrich Graumann, "The Concept of Appropriation (Aneignung) and Modes of Appropriation of Space," in Korosec-Serfaty (ed), *Appropriation of Space*, Strasbourg, Louis Pasteur University, 1978, pp. 113-125.
11. Doreen Massey, *For Space*, London, Sage, 2005; Carl-Friedrich Graumann, "The Concept of Appropriation (Aneignung) and Modes of Appropriation of Space," *Appropriation of Space, op. cit.*
12. David Schak, *A Chinese Beggar's Den: Poverty and Mobility in an Underclass Community, op. cit*, p. 25.
13. Stephen E Lankenau, "Panhandling Repertoires and Routines for Overcoming the Nonperson Treatment," *Deviant Behavior*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1999, p. 184.
14. Bill Jordan, "Begging: The Global Context and International Comparisons," in Hartley Dean (ed), *Begging Questions, op. cit.*, p. 52.
15. Bertolt Brecht, *Threepenny Opera*, translation by the author, following Stephen Hinton, "Synopsis," in Stephen Hinton (ed), *Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 1.
16. In the following, each interview is anonymised but specified by type, place, and time.
17. Zhang Guanzeng, "Struktur und Wandel des öffentlichen Raums in Shanghai" (Structure and change of public space in Shanghai), *in* Dieter Hassenpflug (ed), *Die aufgeschlossene Stadt. Öffentlicher Raum in China von Anting bis Zhuhai* (The open city: Public space in China from Anting to Zhuhai), Shanghai, Tongji Daxue Chubanshe, 2004, pp. 98-133; Xu Bo et al., "Qiantan Zhongguo dangdai chengshi gonggong kongjian sheji linian de yanbian" (On the change of planning principles of public space in China), *Shanxi Jianzhu*, Vol. 34, No. 23, 2008, pp. 45-46.
18. Dieter Hassenpflug, "Die Produktion des öffentlichen Raums in China. Eine Betrachtung aus europäischer Perspektive" (The production of public space in China: The European perspective), *in* Dieter Hassenpflug (ed), *Die aufgeschlossene Stadt, op. cit.*, pp. 10-48; Anthony Orum et al., "Public Man and Public Space in Shanghai Today," *City & Community*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2009, pp. 369-389.
19. He Shenjing et al., "China's Emerging Neoliberal Urbanism: Perspectives from Urban Redevelopment," *Antipode*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 2009, pp. 282-304; Wu Fulong et al., *Urban Development in Post-Reform China: State, Market, and Space*, New York, Routledge, 2007.

companies during the global and national competition between cities. [20] Similar to Western experiences, only affluent users belong to the desired target group, while non-consumers and other groups considered "inappropriate" are directly or indirectly excluded. As the production of these places gains momentum in China, "publicness" is reduced in quantity and quality. [21]

Besides economic incentives, the production of space has a political dimension, especially in authoritarian China. Heike Holbig et al. emphasise that the Communist Party's legitimacy is based on both practical performance and convincing ideology. [22] The "political theatre" [23] at Tiananmen Square in 1989 reinforced the regime's caution and repression of open dissent. Additionally, today's public space has to convince and contribute to the economic program of the Communist Party. Carolyn Marvin and others have shown how hosting mega events such as the Olympic or Asian Games leads to the production of "triumphalist space[s]," [24] combining financial gain with pro-state ideology and distraction from social problems. [25] In these public spaces profit and political prestige intertwine: a "theater in which a pacified public basks in the [economic and political] grandeur of a carefully orchestrated corporate spectacle." [26] However, this spectacle is not uncontested. Among other users, beggars claim public space for themselves and disturb the idealised version of government actors.

Discourses on panhandling

When in the early 1980s the massive population movement from the countryside to the cities began, beggars appeared within the discursive portrayal of rural migrants as illegitimate, dangerous, and criminal. The system of "detention and repatriation," which first concentrated on beggars, the homeless, and "vagrants" (*liulang*) in 1982, eventually searched for prostitutes, "criminal suspects," and finally the "three without" migrants – those without proper ID, residence, or work certificates. [27] This built the basis for sending unwelcome newcomers back to their hometowns immediately and was a main pillar of the discriminating two-class system between city and countryside. When a young student in Guangzhou died during detention in 2003, it revealed the system's arbitrariness and brutality. A subsequent nationwide media outcry demanded fundamental reforms. The detention centres were reorganised into "Rescue (Management) Stations" [28] offering help only to a defined scope of vagrants, beggars, and homeless. Officially, the system transformed "from forceful detention and repatriation to loving care and service." [29]

This change reflects the discourse on deserving, undeserving, and dangerous poor in China. On the one hand, the term "beggar" (*qigai*) connotes the lowest level of poverty, materially as well as socially. [30] According to my observations, common people give alms and show sympathy towards panhandlers in daily life and on social media. [31] Mistreatment is fiercely debated and often seen as a sign of a China where culture and morality are left behind. The problem of beggars becomes a litmus test of righteousness for society and the state. Not only the 2003 incident, but also subsequent considerations of local governments to restrict panhandling triggered vivid public discussion. Intellectuals and scholars alike argued about administrative arbitrary power and the rule of law, human rights, individual freedom, and social security. [32] In this discourse arena, the State Council defines the system of Rescue Stations as social relief. [33]

On the other hand, beggars stand outside the usual structures of social control (family, neighbours, local government, etc.), which makes them suspicious and seemingly dangerous. Commonly combined with the term "vagrant," they likewise connotate flowing without aim, without commitments, engaging in illegitimate and illegal activities. While panhandling in general is not forbidden by law, forcing others (especially children) to panhandle is. [34] This type of organised crime takes centre stage in government work on beggars and strongly influences the assessment of panhandling as a security threat. Moreover, many reports and regulations emphasise beggars' intrusive or deceiving behaviour as well as a trend of "professionalisation" (*zhiyehua*). Guangzhou's local Committee of the People's Political Consultative Conference pointed out: "[T]he number of those coming to the city and panhandling because of poverty is decreasing, and the number of those wanting to make money by panhandling who are idle, despise labour, and love leisure is increasing; the trend of 'professionalisation' becomes obvi-

20. Piper Gaubatz, "New Public Space in Urban China," *China Perpectives*, No. 2008/4, pp. 72-83; Miao Pu, "Brave New City: Three Problems in Chinese Urban Public Space since the 1980s," *Journal of Urban Design*, No. 16, 2011, pp. 179-207; Xue Binxia et al., "Quanqiuhua shidai de Zhongguo chengshi gonggong kongjian – wenti ji duice" (China's urban public space in times of globalisation – problems and solutions), *Huazhong Jianzhu*, Vol. 24, No. 9, 2006, pp. 57-59.
21. Piper Gaubatz, "New Public Space in Urban China," *art. cit.*; Dorothy Solinger, "Streets as Suspect," *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 2013, pp. 3-26; Hu Yongjia et al., "Zhuanxingqi gonggong kongjian chongzhi beijing xia de Zhongguo chengshi cuipianhua yanjiu" (On the fragmentation of Chinese cities in the context of the reorganisation of public space in times of transformation), *Xiandai Chengshi Yanjiu*, No. 3, 2011, pp. 10-13.
22. Heike Holbig et al., "Reclaiming Legitimacy in China," *Politics & Policy*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2010, pp. 395-422.
23. Joseph Esherick et al., "Acting Out Democracy: Political Theater in Modern China," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 4, 1990, pp. 835-865.
24. Carolyn Marvin, "'All under Heaven' – Megaspace in Beijing," in Monroe Price et al. (eds), *Owning the Olympics: Narratives of the New China*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2008, p. 255.
25. Anne-Marie Brady, "The Beijing Olympics as a Campaign of Mass Distraction," *The China Quarterly*, No. 197, 2009, pp. 1-24; Anne-Marie Broudehoux, "Images of Power: Architectures of the Integrated Spectacle at the Beijing Olympics," *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 63, No. 2, 2010, pp. 52-62.
26. Crilley, 1993, quoted in: Don Mitchell, "The End of Public Space?," *art. cit*, p. 120.
27. State Council of the PRC, *Chengshi liulang qitao renyuan shourong qiansong banfa* (Measures for internment and repatriation of urban vagrants and beggars), distributed and effective on 12 May 1982; People's Government of Guangdong Province, *Chengshi liulang qitao renyuan yiji toudu wailiu renyuan shourong qiansong juti banfa* (Concrete measures on the detention and repatriation of vagrants, beggars, and refugees), distributed and effective on 4 February 1983; People's Government of Guangzhou City, *Guanyu dui liulang qitao, anchang jingshenbing huanzhe deng mangliu renyuan de shourong chuli banfa* (On detention and repatriation methods for vagrants and beggars, prostitutes, mentally ill, and other people wandering around), distributed and effective on 10 December 1985; State Council of the PRC, *Guanyu shourong qiansong gongzuo gaige wenti de yijian* (Opinions on the problems of the reform of detention and repatriation), 1991, document No. 48.
28. State Council of the PRC, *Chengshi shenghuo wuzhe de liulang qitao renyuan jiuzhu guanli banfa* (Methods of management and rescue of poor urban vagrants and beggars), effective on 1 August 2003.
29. Tian Xingchun, "'Chengshi shenghuo wuzhe de liulang qitao renyuan jiuzhu guanli banfa' gongbu 10 zhounian – ba da wenti zhongshi" (Ten years of "methods of management and rescue of poor urban vagrants and beggars" – eight problems that need attention), original source: *Renminwang*, 21 July 1213, www.mca.gov.cn/article/ mxht/mtgz/201306/20130600476052.shtml (accessed on 15 March 2014).
30. On the historical dimension of this discourse see: Lu Hanchao, "Becoming Urban: Mendicancy and Vagrants in Modern Shanghai," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 1999, pp. 7-36.
31. See Weibo discussions on www.chinasmack.com: "Metal Bars Pen Up Beggars at Nanchang Temple Fair," "Beggar Beaten and Thrown into Water by Yunnan Chengguan," etc., (accessed on 3 December 2013).
32. For example see: Xu Youyu, "Qitao quanli wuxu falü lai zhengming" (The right of panhandling does not need to be proven by law), 29 December 2003, *Xinjingbao*; Zhou Ping'an, "Liulangzhe de quanli yu guojia quanli" (The rights of vagrants and the rights of the state), *Hebei Faxue*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2008, pp. 14-18; Zheng Chunyan, "'Qitao quan' cunzai ma?" (Does the "right of panhandling" exist?), *Fazhi Ribao*, 18 March 2004.
33. State Council of the PRC, *Chengshi shenghuo wuzhe de liulang qitao renyuan jiuzhu guanli banfa*, *op. cit.*, §5, §14; Guangzhou City Bureau of Civil Affairs et al., *Liulang qitao renyuan jiuzhu guanli shishi xize*, *op. cit.*, §3.
34. National People's Congress of the PRC, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Xingfa* (Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China), revised on 25 February 2011, § 262.

ous." [35] The dichotomisation of deserving "real" and undeserving "professional" beggars is widely accepted among scholars and politicians. The latter meaning oscillates between the afore-mentioned criminals and/or people who refuse the help of the Rescue Stations (showing that they do not require any help), engage in panhandling as a long-term activity (in contrast to a temporary emergency), are neither disabled nor too old (are therefore able to work and in no need to beg for money), exaggerate their appearance of misery (implying that there is no misery at all), and/or people from the same native place who beg or live together (assuming an organised "gang"). [36] The fraud also supposedly makes them rich, corresponding to the well-known motto: "Bang your head on the floor in the city so you can go home to build a house." [37] Since the system changed in 2003, Guangzhou's politicians have claimed that the professionals take the lion's share among beggars, justifying unsympathetic governance. Ultimately, this discourse on deserving, undeserving, and dangerous beggars has generated a great impact on public space management, as their presence becomes a sign of failure and a symbol of poverty, immorality, and managerial incompetence. In the words of various state actors in Guangzhou, acts of begging threaten "social order" (*shehui chengxu*) [38] and reflect negatively upon the "city environment" (*shirong huanjing*), the "city's appearance" (*chengshi xingxiang*), [39] and its international prestige. [40]

Background and reasons for panhandling

Needless to say, poverty or relative poverty are the main driving forces behind panhandling. Underlying reasons for this poverty are numerous, and the stories explaining them are individual. Yet they share common features and are linked to the dynamic transformation of reform China. The following short biographies give a first impression on family background, migration, and family history and the difficulties of surviving by panhandling:

Mr. Bang lived most of his life in a village in Henan Province. He is now 71 years old, and his leg injury and general health have worsened. His wife passed away 13 years ago and they did not have children. The only supportive family member remaining was his nephew, who is also unwell. Village clan members could not be of much assistance, as they were elderly, while the majority of young people migrated to the cities for work. The local state offered little relief. Although he was theoretically eligible for care in a nearby nursing home, the institution lacked the capacity to house him. He received 60 *yuan* in local welfare per month, but required 30 *yuan* per day on average, 10 *yuan* for medicine alone. His decision to escape the hard Henan winter and migrate to Guangzhou was made rather spontaneously. The climate in Guangzhou is warmer than in Henan and the city is supposedly richer, offering a good opportunity to earn extra money through panhandling. After three months, he was not sure anymore. The symbols of wealth were everywhere, such as fashionable people, houses, and cars, yet the few *yuan* in his hand did not indicate a corresponding generosity on the part of passersby. The money was enough to buy food, but it did not cover additional costs such as medicine or accommodation. Being new and on his own in Guangzhou, he planned his return to Henan – hoping to finally acquire a room at the nursing home. [41]

Contrarily, Mr. Mang became accustomed to a life on the move. Raised in a village in Jilin Province, the 47-year-old man enthusiastically explained his adventurous departure from home as a teenager, when in the early 1980s so many "came out" (*chulai*) for work. Migrating and working in various northern cities, he finally moved south and came to Guangzhou routinely throughout a decade. His left foot had been defective since birth, making walking and standing difficult. He went into (illegal) street trade and often struggled with the strict state management of public space. As a shoeshine boy at the train station or as a motorcycle taxi driver, he earned, saved, and invested money but finally lost his capital when his equipment was seized by security staff. With increasing age, he began to panhandle and since he was dissatisfied with Guangzhou, he thought about continuing his wanderings. In this city, however, he was familiar with the surrounding infrastructure, including sleeping places, temples, informative acquaintances, and donors: all important survival factors. His family's role is small in his life; his mother died when he was two years old and he had lost contact with his father after leaving home. [42]

Mr. Gang, on the other hand, visits his parents and five siblings regularly in their rural home in Shaoguang City (Guangdong Province). He is the only family member who migrates for work, and being a little person in his twenties, he wants to stand on his own two feet and "fight for myself" (*ziji fendou*). The others had their own lives and could only offer temporary assistance. Six years ago he conducted some trade, but when business went bad he lacked the capital to continue. Instead, he partnered with a young man who had lost his arm in an accident, but who was tall enough to be seen and strong enough to trail a big speaker around. Together they panhandle relative lucratively by singing pop songs while walking along the

35. Guangzhou Committee of the People's Political Consultative Conference, *Guanyu fazhan wo shi shehui baozhang he shehui jiuzhu shiye de jianyi* (Suggestions on developing the cause of social security and social rescue), www.gzzx.gov.cn/zjzx/gzszxz/zzgzcs11/zzjyxb/201202/33753.html (accessed on 13 March 2014).

36. See Zhang Qixue et al. "Jinnian lai xuejie guanyu liulang qitao wenti yanjiu shuping" (A review of academic studies on vagrancy and begging), Renkou Xuekan, No. 1, 2011, pp. 67-76.; Tang Xiujuan, "Guangzhou liulang qitao renyuan shengcun zhuangkuang diaocha," *art. cit.*; Qin Hanpeng, *Chengshi liulang qitao renyuan guanli fangshi tanxi* (Analysis of management methods of urban vagrants and beggars), Third Prize Thesis at Guangdong Civil Affairs Forum, www.gdmz.gov.cn/mzyj/llyj/201310/W020131018350153761372.doc (accessed on 15 March 2014); Wei Liming, "Qigai, youde yao jiu youde yao fa" (Beggars, some have to be rescued, some have to be punished), *Xinxi Shibao*, 19 August 2005.

37. Tang Xiujuan, "*Chengshi liulang qitao renyuan jiuzhu guanli zhengce de yunxing xiaoying – jiyu Guangzhoushi de shizheng yanjiu*" (Process effectiveness of salvation and management policies regarding urban vagrants and beggars – research on Guangzhou City), *Guojia Xingzheng Xueyuan Xuebao*, No. 2, 2010, p. 102; Wang Yingying, "*Woguo shehui zhuanxingqi xia zhiye qigai chansheng de yuanyin yu fangkang duice*" (Origins and countermeasures for prevention and control of the emergence of professional beggars during the social transformation of our country), *Fazhi yu Shehui*, No. 9, 2008, p. 250; Xu Fang *et al.*, "*Dangqian woguo shehui qitao xianxiang de weihai ji yingxiang*," *art. cit.*, p. 61.

38. Bureau of Civil Affairs of Liwan District, *Liwanqu jiji zuohao liulang qitao renyuan jiuzhu gongzuo* (Liwan District engages enthusiastically in the rescue of vagrants and beggars), 2009, www.gzmz.gov.cn/zwgl/mzyw/qxdt/200908/4895.html (accessed on 8 April 2012); Bureau of Civil Affairs of Huangpu District, *Huangpuqu Minzhengju jieqian dali zuohao liulang qitao lianhe xuncha jiuzhu gongzuo* (The Bureau of Civil Affairs of Huangpu District succeeds in its cooperative patrol and rescue work on vagrants and beggars before the holidays), 2010, www.gzmz.gov.cn/zwgl/mzyw/qxdt/201002/6011.html (accessed on 8 April 2012).

39. Bureau of Civil Affairs of Guangzhou City *et al.*, *Zhuanfa guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang chengshi jietou liulang qitao renyuan jiuzhu guanli he liulang weichengnianren jiejiu baohu gongzuo de tongzhi* (Notice on further rescue and management of vagrants and beggars on the streets and the help and protection of minors), 2009, www.gzmz.gov.cn/zwgl/flwj/gfxwj/200910/9394.html (accessed on 8 April 2012); Mobile Rescue Service Team of Guangzhou City, *Liudong jiuzhu fuwudui kazhan Baiyun jichang nei liulang qitao renyuan zhuanxiang jiuzhu xingdong* (The Mobile Rescue Service Team begins a special rescue program on vagrants and beggars at Baiyun Airport), 2008, www.gzmz.gov.cn/zwgl/mzyw/gzdt/200809/3011.html (accessed on 8 April 2012); Bureau of Civil Affairs of Huangpu District, *Duofang liandong zhifa jiuzhu liulang qitao renyuan* (The joint enforcement of the rescue of vagrants and beggars by multiple parties), 2008, www.gzmz.gov.cn/zwgl/mzyw/jsdwdt/200802/2346.html (accessed on 8 April 2012).

40. "*Guangzhou Renda daibiao cheng qigai renyuan buli gai chengshi guoji xingxiang*" (Representative of Guangzhou's Peoples' Congress says that beggars have a bad influence on the international image of this city), *Xinxi Shibao*, 8 December 2008.

41. Interview beggar Bang RWM 26.01.2013.

42. Interviews beggar Mang DFS 08.02.2013 and 28.08.2013.

streets. For Mr. Gang, this is a reasonable way of "continuing fighting" (*jixu fendou*) for his own livelihood. [43]

These introductions and further research suggest that the typical beggar profile combines three aspects of vulnerability. Mostly, they a) are rural migrants, b) have limited work ability due to age, disability, or illness, and c) lack governmental and familial support in times of hardship.

In respect of the first category, Tang Xiujuan's survey on 135 beggars in Guangzhou in 2007 found that 95% were rural migrants. In the current study, all but one of the panhandling interviewees were from the countryside. They migrate because of the growing wealth gap between regions and between urban and rural areas. In contrast to urban citizens with residence certificates (*hukou*), rural migrants are more likely to fall into a poverty trap. They often work in low-paid jobs with increased health risks, lack social capital in the city (especially family), and are ineligible for urban social welfare. [44] Conversely, panhandling can be the purpose of migration. While beggars hope for wealthy and generous urbanites, the anonymity of the cities provides freedom from judgment. Some beggars migrate to cities solely on a seasonal basis, during agricultural low times or religious holidays. [45]

Regarding the second and third category, a survey ordered by Guangzhou's Rescue Stations in 2008 states "old age and/or physical disability" as the main reasons for panhandling for 61% of the 300 interviewees. [46] In the current study, physically challenged beggars accounted for 70%. The moment support is needed is often the moment when most beggars' biographies change due to the unreliability of the family or state as pillars of welfare. Guoxian Lu et al.'s survey in 2010 regarding 130 beggars in Guangzhou and four other cities found that 69% of beggars were not married and 46% did not have children [47] – an unusually high percentage for China. Similarly, for my interviewees family was not a factor to count on: parents were either too old or deceased, [48] while siblings or children were unreliable and/or struggled themselves. [49] Panhandling is usually a sign of not only individual but also familial poverty. Moreover, the interviewees indicated that they were too ashamed to return to their hometowns without having earned sufficient money. [50] They also did not dare to ask for help, [51] or had been estranged throughout decades of migration. [52] Regarding governmental welfare, rural migrants do not have access to urban services due to the *hukou* system. In the countryside, the pension system, health insurance, and the provision of comprehensive health care are still under construction. Financial and medical support for the elderly and for physically and mentally challenged people are also limited or unavailable. [53] The treatment of illnesses and disabilities is complicated, and homecare institutions are too expensive, overcrowded, non-existent or unknown. [54] Several interviewees received financial support from their local government, mainly within the Minimum Livelihood Guarantee program known as "*dibao*." [55] Claiming the payment as too low (55 to 100 *yuan*/month), they supplement it with panhandling in the city. [56]

To make a living by begging on the streets is seldom a sudden decision, but part of an extended struggle with poverty. Some beg for themselves, some for loved ones. It can be a temporary or long-term activity; it can be combined with other forms of money-making, and does not necessarily involve homelessness. Eight of the 22 interviewed beggars either rented independently or shared inexpensive accommodation with family or acquaintances. Not every beggar was equally "successful," and the amount of daily alms was strongly dependent upon both performance and access to public space.

Rescue stations, chengguan*, and patterns of public order*

Guangzhou's Rescue Station system comes under the Bureau of Civil Affairs and consists of two main stations (Tianhe, Luogang), three branches in distant districts (Panyu, Zengcheng, Huadu) and a varying number of "Mobile Rescue Service Teams." However, this institution only plays a small role in the governance of public space and the daily lives of beggars. Firstly, the stations' service is limited. It is not a place of daily refuge, but for short-term emergencies. A beggar can receive medical attention, shelter, and food for a maximum of ten days, twice a year, while the station organises and funds the journey home. [57] For my interviewees this offer is not attractive. It does not solve their long-term problems with poverty. They left home for a reason, and being sent home only means having to begin travelling anew. [58] Moreover, they prefer the freedom they are used to and refuse the discipline within the station (i.e., being told when to get up and go to bed, not to drink or smoke, etc.) [59] or remember times when they were not allowed to leave. [60] According to the government survey on 300 beggars mentioned above, 47% refused to go to a Rescue Station. [61]

Secondly, the institution's legal and personnel capacities are limited. Not able to totally shake off their past, Guangzhou's Rescue Stations understand their work as both social relief *and* management. [62] However, the respective laws keep the target group small and only include people who a) wander around or panhandle, b) are not able to take care of food and shelter, c) have no relatives or friends to help, d) are not entitled to the urban minimum allowance or the rural welfare for destitute house-

43. Interview beggar Gang GXS 11.02.2013.
44. See Bettina Gransow et al. (eds), *Migrants and Health in Urban China*, Münster, LIT Verlag, 2010; Dorothy Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China*, *op. cit.*
45. Interview beggar Wang HDXC 21.02.2012; observation Spring Festival 2013.
46. Hu Cuixing, *Chengshi liulang qitao renyuan guanli duice de sikao, op. cit.*, p. 11.
47. Lu Guoxian et al., "Chengshi liulang qitao renyuan de shengcun zhuangkuang, shehui juli yu guanli chuangxin silu" (Innovative thinking on the living situation of vagrants and beggars, social distance and management)," *Zhonghua Renmin Gong'an Daxue Xuebao (Shehui Kexueban)*, No. 3, 2012, p. 39.
48. Interviews beggar Rang LRS 24.01.2012; beggar Quan DFS 24.01.2013; beggar Hang DXC 21.02.2012; beggar Ang SYG 20.02.2013; beggar Ing DSC Summer 2013.
49. Interviews beggar Kang SXJ 05.09.2012; beggar Eng LRS 11.02.2013; beggar Gang GXS 11.02.2013.
50. Interview beggar Rang LRS 24.01.2012.
51. Interview beggar Nang LRS 28.08.2012.
52. Interviews beggar Mang DFS 28.08.2012; beggar Dang SYG 23.01.2013; beggar Cang LRS 24.01.2013; beggar Eng LRS 11.02.2013.
53. Daniel Fu Keung Wong et al., "A Critical Review of Mental Health and Mental Health-Related Policies in China: More Actions Required," *International Journal of Social Welfare*, early view online, 2013, pp. 1-10; Shen Suyan et al., "Quality of Life and Old Age Social Welfare System for the Rural Elderly in China," *Ageing International*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2012, pp. 285-299.
54. Interviews beggar Fang GXS 11.02.2013; beggar Sang SYG Summer 2013.
55. Interviews beggar Nang LRS 28.08.2012; beggar Pang SXJ 25.08.2012; beggar Ang SYG 20.02.2013; beggar Bang RWM 26.01.2013.
56. Interview beggar Ing DSC Sommer 2013.
57. State Council, *Chengshi shenghuo wuzhe de liulang qitao renyuan jiuzhu guanli banfa, op. cit.*; Ministry of Civil Affairs, *Chengshi shenghuo wuzhe de liulang qitao renyuan jiuzhu guanli banfa shishi xize, op. cit.*
58. Interviews beggar Jang ZSWL 14.04.2012; beggar Rang LRS 24.01.2012; beggar Hang GXS/LRS 11.02.2013.
59. Interview beggar Quan DFS 8.02.2013.
60. Interviews beggar Kang SXJ 02.09.2012; beggar Wang HDXC 21.02.2012.
61. Hu Cuixing, *Chengshi liulang qitao renyuan guanli duice de sikao, op. cit.*, p. 16.
62. *Ibid.*; see also Guangzhou Committee of People's Political Consultative Conference, *Guanyu fazhan wo shi shehui baozhang he shehui jiuzhu shiye de jianyi, op. cit.*

holds. [63] This definition excludes most urban poor [64] and, according to the above logic on "professionalism," also most beggars frequently found in public space. Moreover, the new regulations require the voluntary cooperation of beggars. The stations cannot make them leave the city anymore and the Mobile Rescue Teams cannot force beggars to come with them. Patrols are allowed to inform and distribute leaflets, to "advise and persuade" (*quandao*) and finally escort them to the stations. However, most Mobile Teams are poorly staffed and are not a strong presence in public space. [65]

To patrol the streets, the Stations depend on the cooperation of local police and especially *chengguan*, a common Chinese abbreviation for the "Comprehensive City Management Enforcement Team." It is the most visible governmental security force in public space in Guangzhou. *Chengguan* takes over the right of different municipal bureaus to control administrative delinquencies related to the cityscape, and are mainly known for dealing with street peddlers. Given the great variety of *chengguan*'s tasks, additional cooperation with the Rescue Stations is difficult. The 2012 commentary by Guangzhou's local committee of the People's Political Consultative Conference states: "Since the system is flawed, responsibilities are unclear, cooperation is sluggish, and participation insufficient, our city's Rescue and Management work has not yet efficiently joined forces; the combined, comprehensive governance of the various divisions is ineffective." [66]

However, with the increasing importance of city appearance and the expansion of *chengguan* tasks, panhandling was similarly framed as other undesired usages of public space along with street vendors and illegal advertisement. [67] Although normally *chengguan* do not admit responsibility for beggars, [68] this logic changes according to certain zones and periods. As I argue elsewhere, the management of urban public space is locally specific and rhythmic. With the growing popularity of a location, controls are intensified, competences extended, and the presence of security personnel increased. They concentrate on so-called "key areas," such as shopping streets, theatres, parks, sightseeing spots, consulate areas, main traffic axes, train stations, ports, etc. In interviews, *chengguan* patrol officers highlighted concerns regarding traffic flow and described beggars as a possible hindrance or vulnerable traffic participants to explain the necessity of expulsion. [69] However, the choice of places also reflects the desire to present a positive image of the city to Chinese and foreign visitors.

Moreover, control is enforced during seasonal or exceptional events such as holidays, the city development campaigns "Hygienic City" and "Civilised City," or the Asian Games. These are also the times when patrols of the Rescue Stations make increased appearances, urging all beggars to leave [70] or transporting them to the stations against their will. [71] The "Plan for Rescue and Management during the Asian Games in Guangzhou in 2010" promised a clear reduction of beggars in public space, [72] corresponding to similar statements at the district level. Yuexiu's Sub-bureau of Civil Affairs, for example, was eager to "prevent the 'backflow' of homeless and beggars, preserving the cleanliness of the 'windows of the city'." [73] With the approaching Asian Games, the number of repatriated people rose from 97 in 2004 to 18,823 in 2009, and the times of "offering help" (*gong jiuzhu*) to homeless and beggars more than doubled. [74] Of 36,082 cases of "offering help" in 2010, 54% fell in the single month of the Asian Games (12 November to 20 December 2010). [75] Observation and conversations with beggars during other time periods of control confirm the practice of increased expulsion. It is this rhythm of governing public space that mainly influences beggars' access and performance strategies.

Strategies of panhandling in consumption and leisure-time areas

Shopping streets belong to the aforementioned key areas of stricter governance. These hot spots are surrounded by several layers of lessening control with increasing distance. Therefore, begging techniques *on* shopping streets are quite hidden; the more obvious performances can be found *around* pedestrian borders and their wider vicinities. How long and freely beggars can perform depends on the interference of security personnel, but there is always a moment when they must vacate the scene. [76]

To be a successful beggar means to be authentic, often portraying a convincing story of misery. The basics begin with appearance: poor, outworn clothes, uncombed greasy hair, and generally dirty. [77] Some only sit around in a stooped position. Stronger feelings of sympathy can be drawn by being female, being/having a child, being very old, disabled, or ill, or having to take care of such a person. Thus, many beggars expose their injuries, limbs, or burned or diseased skin. Some might fake or exaggerate, sit half naked or lie prone on a rolling board to increase the pitiful impression. Others display a sick family member, shout, cry, and kowtow continuously and desperately towards possible donors. The more convincing and extreme the misery portrayed, the less security personnel dare to intervene, afraid to draw attention and disapproval of passersby or even worse, to provoke a scene covered by the media. [78]

Other strategies explain begging as the result of a process in the context of today's socio-economic transformation, but lacking the direct political implication. Writing on the pavement with chalk or putting up a poster, adding pictures and certifications, they provide many convincing details such as age, status, hometown, life path, and reasons for begging. [79] They primarily indicate poverty due to rural origin and mostly talk about illnesses

63. Ministry of Civil Affairs, *Chengshi shenghuo wuzhe de liulang qitao renyuan jiuzhu guanli banfa shishi xize, op. cit;* Guangzhou City Bureau of Civil Affairs *et al.*, *Liulang qitao renyuan jiuzhu guanli shishi xize, op. cit.*
64. Qin Hanpeng, *Chengshi liulang qitao renyuan guanli fangshi tanxi, op.cit.*
65. Own observation; see Hu Cuixing, *Chengshi liulang qitao renyuan guanli duice de sikao, op. cit.*, p. 16.
66. Guangzhou Committee of People's Political Consultative Conference, *Guanyu fazhan wo shi shehui baozhang he shehui jiuzhu shiye de jianyi, op. cit.*
67. Ryanne Flock et al., "Migrant Street Vendors in Urban China and the Contestation of Public Space," *Population, Place and Space*, 2014, forthcoming.
68. Interviews beggar Wang HDXC 21.02.2012; beggar Kang SXJ 02.09.2012; *chengguan* Kecun November 2011.
69. Interview Beggar NHSM March 2013; Interview *chengguan* NHSM March 2013.
70. Observation SXJ 02.09.2012.
71. Interview beggar Wang HDXC 21.02.2012.
72. "Yayun qijian yancha weifa qitao" (Illegal begging will be strictly controlled before the Asian Games), *Yangcheng Wanbao*, 6 March 2010; similar see "Guangzhou Yayun qijian zhongdianqu jiang wu liulangzhe - husong jiuzhuzhe fanxiang" (Guangzhou's key areas will be without vagrants during the Asian Games – praise on the direction of rescue work), *Xinxi Shibao*, 20 October 2010.
73. "Yuexiu fenju shenru tuijin ying Yayun liulang qitao renyuan jiuzhu guanli gongzuo" (The Sub-bureau of Yuexiu increases its commitment to rescue and management work regarding vagrants and beggars to welcome the Asian Games), 2010, www.gzcg.gov.cn/site/public/archive.aspx?CategoryId=Mjg5LDMzOQ-&DocumentId=NjkyMDQ- (accessed on 18 April 2012).
74. See *Guangzhou Yearbook*, respective years, www.guangzhou.gov.cn (accessed on 7 April 2014).
75. Bureau of Civil Affairs of Guangzhou City, *Guangzhoushi Minzhengju 2010 nian gongzuo zongjie* (Summary on the work of the Bureau of Civil Affairs of Guangzhou City in 2010), 2011, www.gzmz.gov.cn/zwgl/ghjh/ndgzjh/201103/9332.html (accessed on 14 July 2012).
76. Observation; interviews beggar Jang ZSWL 14.04.2012; beggar Mang DFS 28.08.2012; beggar Gang GXS 11.02.2013.
77. Eric Henry, "The Beggar's Play," *art. cit.*, p. 48.
78. Interview security personnel BJL 25.05.2012; observation shopping street.
79. The following description is based on 24 beggar posters and street writings.

and medical fees, resulting deaths and unsuccessful treatment of themselves or loved ones. Some add information on the difficult migration process and the impossibility of finding a job. Their aims are simple and important: to get by, to get well, and to go home. With that they refer to the known narrative of the disadvantaged countryside and resulting migration as mentioned above, but offer a "happy ending," a plausible end to their hardship should enough help be offered.

To be in need is not enough – it has to be combined with moral integrity to be deserving. Authenticity is supposed to mean honesty, and begging for loved ones exhibits the virtue of piety. Panhandlers often seem modest, refrain from smoking or drinking, are polite and grateful when alms are given, and some even kowtow to implicate the hierarchy between them and donors. Compliments like "good people" (*haoren*) or "people with kind hearts" (*haoxinren*) give donors a further positive self image, while well-wishing brings to mind the religious logic that good deeds will be rewarded someday. They address the pedestrians directly, calling them uncle, aunt, older brother, etc., to "assert bonds of kinship with donors to override the lack of social ties and stimulate compassion." [80] Panhandlers appeal to, test, and reassure the moral integrity of passersby.

The most effective "fashion" of panhandling strategies is to make oneself heard. Many beggars play music from a tape, play instruments, or sing. Equipped with microphones and effective speakers, they entertain pedestrians by playing popular love songs. The Erhu player (Chinese viola) or the mobile music couple seem to be more traditional. First goes an old woman, bending over with a bowl in hand or a bucket hanging from her neck. Behind her follows a blind man, playing an Erhu, Sheng (a reed instrument), or harmonica fixed onto a frame in front of his mouth and bells at his feet, jingling with every step – a one man band. He also carries a little speaker hidden in a bag. The melancholy music underpins their misery and ensures they are not so easily overlooked, but rather are noticed and heard on the shopping streets which are places of "*renao*," of noise and excitement.

Beggars are distributed over the wider area, as competition is bad for "business," and one's own misery has to be the greatest. They do not only stick out, but also fit in with the culture of entertainment in the city centre's consumption and leisure-time areas. Moreover, as the security system restrains access, beggars have to make maximum use of limited and uncertain time and space, acting as efficiently as possible. The strictness of governance, the high competition for public space, and the audience's attention result in an enhancement of visible and audible effects and more elaborated performances.

Strategies for panhandling in religious settings

Although communist rule dissolved the traditional structures between temples and "beggar gangs" after 1949, [81] and institutional charity work does not include beggars, [82] the latter still enjoy greater freedom at public places near religious sites. Normally, neither *chengguan* nor other security personnel bother them there. The special treatment in religious places becomes clear with the interesting case of the Dafo Temple, which is situated between two side streets of the Beijing Lu pedestrian shopping area. When asked about a beggar sitting at the temple's archway, a *chengguan* officer answered: "He belongs to the temple; this is not my concern." [83] The number of beggars at religious sites rises with the number of visitors, according to the rhythm of religious life. Guangxiao Si and the nearby Liurong Si, for example, are among the most popular temples in Guangzhou and attract about 30 beggars a day.

In contrast to leisure time areas, at religious sites beggars tend to sit in groups. They often know each other and come regularly to these places, some already for several years. [84] Filling the squares and paths in front and around the religious sites, only a few consider the target group and give themselves a religious air with a chanted "hallelujah" or a whispered "*emi tuofo*," with Buddhist or Christian music. Most just wait for alms. At the Sacred Heart Church, for example, after the mass has ended, believers swarm out of the gates and only four of ten beggars stand up, holding out their bowls. The others remain seated, talking. Compared with consumption and leisure-time areas, their little effort to present a "show" is striking, but explainable: here donors are mostly believers, [85] and it becomes clear that giving alms is part of the visiting process. Rather than being impressed by performances of misery, they give because of (the appearance of) pious duty and give automatically to more than one beggar. Mr. Mang explained that it is important to become a regular at a place, as donors give more readily to a familiar face. [86] On the other hand, the accessibility of these locations is not restricted, and beggars do not need to perform efficiently. At churches, they commute between the different houses and mass times. At the temples, they spend the whole day, pile their belongings in the corner and later sleep in the doorways or nearby. These are not only panhandling but also living spaces.

Increasing opportunities for beggars at temples and churches stand in the context of the religious revival in China since the beginning of reforms. However, not only greater religious freedom and popular demand, but also the intertwined economic and political interests of local governments play a role, leading to a new development of religious sites. Since the 1990s, government propaganda selectively uses tradition to its own advantage, and city governments present and rebuild local traditions and heritage spaces in the process of city branding. [87] A good example is Guangzhou's City God Temple in the city centre. Once occupied by a factory, the Daoist location was rebuilt in 2010. An impressive archway on the big front square directs the view to the colourful monument right next to the Nanyue Palace Museum, where Guangzhou wishes to present its special position in history. Beggars are nowhere to be seen and are not allowed by *chengguan* who are in charge of the square. [88] Similarly, at temple fairs: blossoming in Imperial and Republican China, scholars see them as *the* Chinese public space as they gathered people from all walks of life – including beggars. [89] Today's version of the Yuexiu Temple Fair is advertised as traditional local culture, and expands from an arts and crafts market at the City God Temple to a food fes-

80. Eric Henry, "The Beggar's Play," *art. cit.*, p. 20.
81. Editorial Committee of the Local Chronics of Guangzhou, *Guangzhou shizhi, di shiliu juan* (Chronics of Guangzhou City, vol.16), electronical version, Guangzhou, Guangzhou Chubanshe, 1995, pp. 35f, see www.gzsdfz.org.cn (accessed on 22 November 2013).
82. Interviews nun SHC 28.05.2012; beggar Mang and Buddhist monk DFS 28.08.2012; monk HDXC 26.01.2013
83. Interview *chengguan* BJL January 2012.
84. Interviews nun SCH 28.05.2012; beggar Ong SHC 27.11.2011; fortune teller GXS 25.05.2012.
85. Interview fortune teller GXS 25.05.2012.
86. Interview beggar Mang DFS 08.02.2013.
87. Yan Hongliang et al., "Cultural Tourism, Ceremony and the State in China," *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 2008, pp. 969-989.
88. Observation; Interview monk CHM 23.01.2013.
89. Heng Chye Kiang, "Chinese Public Space: A Brief Account," in Mike Douglass et al. (eds), *Globalisation, the City and Civil Society in Pacific Asia: The Social Production of Civic Spaces*, New York, Routledge 2008, pp. 79-103.

tival near the Beijing Lu shopping street. The Boluo Temple Fair at the remote Temple of the Southern Sea God offers more ready-made knick-knacks, games, magic, and fortune telling. Both fairs are among the most popular in Guangzhou and attract believers and non-believers alike. As religious sites transform into consumption and leisure-time areas that shape and present the city image, they become places of economic and political profitability. Thus, *chengguan* increase their controls, and deny access to beggars. (90)

Conclusion

Urban panhandlers in China are children of the reform and open-door policies. The resulting imbalance between regions, countryside and city, and non-urban and urban *hukou* regarding job opportunities, income and social services produces high-risk groups that lack protection in times of hardship. In the case of panhandlers, several misfortunes accumulate: they are mostly rural migrants who are old, disabled, or ill, lacking both family support and (sufficient) government assistance. They belong to the most deprived among the urban poor.

Besides higher-level rationales, this paper emphasised strategies of everyday life and the spatial dimension. To make a living, beggars depend on the "publicness" of a place, not only to have access themselves but to impress a variety of possible donors. While performance is always part of successful panhandling, it is also a way to contest for the resource of "public space." Beggars answer to a challenge of contrasting governmental legitimacy - economic progress and strength versus responsibility and morality. In consumption and leisure-time areas, their performances of authenticity and deservingness refer to accepted reasons of vulnerability and moral behaviour, appealing to the integrity of those passing by and the *chengguan*. Moreover, beggars fit into the culture of entertainment and compensate for the short time and the less optimal position available due to government restrictions. However, with increasing visible and audible effects, the financial and organisational investment in more elaborated performances rises as well. While their exclusion is not absolute, the cost of appropriation increases and the barriers of public space become stronger. Both denied access and increased effort take resources from the panhandling poor. Ironically, being concerned about trends of "professionalisation," the rhythmical governance according to zones and periods by Rescue Stations and *chengguan* contributes to the logic that being poor and miserable is not enough anymore to survive as a beggar.

How strong management and social function (religion, consumption, entertainment) influence spatial appropriation by beggars shows the contrasting example of religious sites. These are traditional gathering spots for beggars due to the connection between charity and the salvation of believer. While many Chinese find their way back to religion, beggars enjoy more freedom as well and have to invest less in performance. As they are able to stay all day, public space becomes not only a working but also a necessary living space. However, when religious sites are claimed for profit and prestige, exhibit history as proud and rooted and religion as a way of entertainment and consumption, beggars are out of place again.

The government's focus becomes clear with the limited Rescue system that "offers help" either by finally organising beggars' departure from the city or by urging them to leave visible spots. Moreover, *chengguan* is the main actor dealing with beggars on the streets and follows the needs of the city's appearance. "Triumphalist spaces" are not exclusive to mega events anymore but extend into everyday life, although to varying degrees, they are produced for recurring city campaigns or holiday times, historical places, and tourist areas and finally in common consumption and entertainment settings. At the same time, governance according to zones and periods gives an opportunity to catch a glimpse of the ideal public space in the eyes of Guangzhou's local government. Not only beggars are excluded but also street vendors, street artists, political activists, and other forms of "chaos" disturbing the image of a modern, wealthy, "hygienic," "civilised," and well managed city. The economic incentives are unsurprising, considering the capitalist logic prevailing in urban China. However, beggars display the negative side of the reforms and interfere with the spatial representation of a successful transformation and harmonious society. Whether seen as vulnerable and deserving of assistance or as undeserving and dangerous, beggars are symbols of the poverty, immorality, instability, and incompetence of the state. These were the arguments of Mao Zedong, who in the early years of the People's Republic declared that there was no place for the phenomenon of panhandling in the "New China." (91) Today, the communist leadership cannot entirely turn its back on this logic. In the end, their solution aims less at social relief than at taking the objective elements out of sight. The exclusion of beggars is based on the desire of state actors to create "spaces of representation" where economic profits merge with political prestige.

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90. Observation; interviews *chengguan* NHSM March 2013; beggar Tang NHSM March 2013.
91. Aminda M. Smith, *Reeducating the People, op. cit.*