***Min Yuan Stadium*’ s simulacra. An architectural tourism flagship for the Western architecture district in Tianjin?**

**Maria Gravari-Barbas,**

IREST, EIREST, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University

**Sandra Guinand**

Institut für Geographie und Regionalforschung, Vienna University

Chercheure associée EIREST, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University ; Centre Jacques Berque, Rabat

**Liu Yue**

EIREST, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University

When arriving to the « Western architecture district » one is struck by the imposing building of the Min Yan Stadium. With its large arcades and two stories height, the building strongly contrasts with the scale and the morphological aspects of this tourism destination.

Wudado district used to be the former British concession during the 19th century. It is mainly composed of modernist - Bauhaus style villas and apartment buildings, in the middle of which one can find the Min Yuan Stadium. This large district with its lush green trees, gardens, low traffic and density gives the visitors or the residents a real break from the busy 14 million megapolis.

However, the actual Min Yan Stadium is a mere *artefact* constructed from scratch in 2014. The original British stadium was built in 1926 by the *British Municipal Committee*. Considered an important sports equipment, it had since then been rebuilt more than three times and was entirely demolished in 2012

The stadium follows a new “lifestyle” trend in commercial and leisure functions. It hosts various restaurants and cafés, museums, night-clubs, diverse high-end retail shops and temporary events. Heritage is an important feature of the project as it participates to the storytelling and brings a historical depth to this flagship equipment.

In this paper, we would like to question the stadium’s reconstruction under the light of tourism. As one of the main function of the equipment is, according to Wang Yeming, Director of Fifth Avenue Heping District administration committee: *“to promote the area's cultural diversity and attract an increasing number of foreign tourists"*. How does this equipment respond to tourism and how does tourism in turn shape it? What lies behind the storytelling? How do locals respond to the stadium and how does its function and architecture influence and interact with the surrounding environment? We will show how in fact this historical *simulacra* contributes to blur the line between the real and the fake, history and imaginaries and creates distorted geographies.

**Maria Gravari-Barbas,** is aprofessor of Geography at Paris 1 University Panthéon-Sorbonne. She is the Director of the Institute for Research and High Studies on Tourism *(Institut de Recherches et d’Etudes Supérieures du Tourisme, IREST)* of Paris 1 – Sorbonne University. She has a degree in Architecture and Urban Design (University of Athens, 1985), and a PhD in Geography and Planning (Paris 4 – Sorbonne University, 1991). She was Fellow at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA (1990). She is the director of the EIREST, a multidisciplinary research laboratory focusing on tourism, mainly related to cultural heritage and development. She is also the director of the UNESCO Chair “Tourism, Culture, Development” of Paris 1- Sorbonne University and the coordinator of the UNITWIN network of the same name, comprising more than 25 top level universities all around the World. She is invited professor in different Universities in Europe, the States and Latin America. She is the author of several books and papers related to Tourism, Culture and Heritage.

**Sandra Guinand** is an urban-planner and geographer. She is FNS Fellow, visiting researcher at Institute für Geographie und Regional Forschung, Vienna University, Associate researcher at EIREST, Paris and Centre Jacques Berque, Rabat. Her research interests focuses on urban regeneration projects, socio-economical transformations of urban landscape, with a specific focus on heritage processes and public-private partnerships.