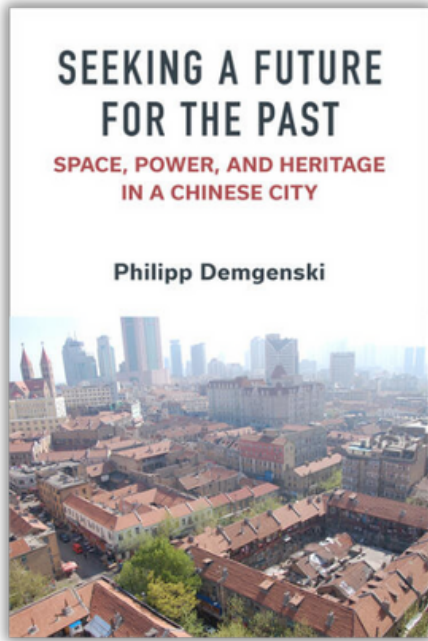




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SEEKING A FUTURE FOR THE PAST

SPACE, POWER, AND HERITAGE IN A CHINESE CITY

Philipp Demgenski

China Understandings Today

Seeking a Future for the Past: Space, Power, and Heritage in a Chinese City examines the complexities and changing sociopolitical dynamics of urban renewal in contemporary China. Drawing on ten years of ethnographic fieldwork in the northeastern Chinese city of Qingdao, the book tells the story of the slow, fragmented, and contentious transformation of Dabaodao—an area in the city’s former colonial center—from a place of common homes occupied by the urban poor into a showcase of architectural heritage and site for tourism and consumption. The ethnography provides a nuanced account of the diverse experiences and views of a range of groups involved in, shaping, and being shaped by the urban renewal process—local residents, migrant workers, preservationists, planners, and government officials— and particularly foregrounds the voices and experiences of marginal groups, such as migrants in the city. Unpacking structural reasons for urban developmental impasses, it paints a nuanced local picture of urban governance and political practice in contemporary urban China. *Seeking a Future for the Past* also weighs the positives and negatives of heritage preservation and scrutinizes the meanings and effects of “preservation” on diverse social actors. By zeroing in on the seemingly contradictory yet coexisting processes of urban stagnation and urban destruction, the book reveals the multifaceted challenges that China faces in reforming its urbanization practices and, ultimately, in managing its urban future.

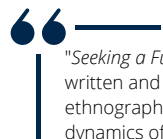
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"*Seeking a Future for the Past* is a sensitively written and comprehensively researched ethnographic study of the sociopolitical dynamics of urban redevelopment and renewal, charting the transformation of a small, poor, and socially marginalized neighborhood located in the center of Qingdao’s old city into a showcase for Qingdao’s heritage celebration of its modern history. I hope it becomes a major text in studies of urban transformation in China and of urban anthropology in general."

—Harriet Evans,
Westminster University / LSE

Philipp Demgenski is Assistant Professor in Anthropology within the Department of Sociology at Zhejiang University.

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