

Once Upon A Time - And Everything Changed



A day at the end of June, 8:36 a.m. - A high-speed train, G7381 with the name "Harmony", takes me from Shanghai to Hangzhou. Apparently it was Marco Polo who said 下来有苏杭 上有天堂 and indeed, it seems to be heaven on earth. I am traveling there on the ground, at the earthly speed of nearly 350 km.

Outside the built-up areas, the fields, the streets and the huge green-house areas - passing by like images from a dream, appearing and disappearing like the clouds one may see looking out of the window of an aircraft ... 350, 300 250, 200, 180, 140, 90, 80, 55, 30, 20, 10, 9, 7, 4 ... the train stops.

It has been a while since I lived in a town in Germany - mind, not a village, not a city: a town. It has approximately 25,000 inhabitants and occasionally we would go to a city nearby: a place with probably 100,000 inhabitants. Well, we thought of it as a city. At least it had an opera house and a theatre and I had been privileged enough to occasionally be able to go there - after finding the required transportation and money. It's among my favorite childhood memories, one of the things I thoroughly enjoyed during my childhood. Perhaps I enjoyed it so much because it made a little dent in an environment that seemed, and actually was, smooth. Any attempt to escape only lead to slippery ground that, although it required permanent movement, did not allow progress.

A little later this tiny, seamless world had burst. For me, in the same way as for the many others who turned to the streets at the end of the 1960s - against the aggressors in Vietnam, against German media-giant Springer who had been one of the gofers of the aggressors in the far-east; against the Gaullist system in France. But we also turned to the streets in favour of matters - of Bloch's notion of the *Principle of Hope* and Marcuse's realist utopia: *You should sleep for nine hours without dreams. Then you will have the whole day for dreams.*

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