



Residential segregation and well-being inequality over time: A study on the local and migrant elderly people in Shanghai



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ABSTRACT

China achieved great economic success during the market transition, but is now facing increasing social problems and challenges, such as institutional inequality and population ageing. A consequence of this institutional inequality due to the Hukou system is the emerging segregation in cities between locals and migrants. This segregation is growing during last decades and exerts negative implications on the well-being distribution between locals and migrants including their older subcategories. This paper focuses on the residential segregation between local and migrant elderly people and its implications on their access to geographical resources and on their well-being in central Shanghai over the period 2000–2010. Access to geographical services and resources for the elderly is employed as the proxy for their well-being measurement. This paper concludes that the forthcoming housing market reform over the last decade has intensified the differentiations of housing price and new housing distribution, especially those of high-priced commercial housing, resulting in a slightly strengthened residential segregation between local and migrant elderly people. As a consequence, this segregation continues to produce inequality in the well-being distribution between these two elderly groups. However, this paper also shows that the inequality gap has been slightly narrowed due to the greater well-being improvement of migrant elderly.

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1. Introduction

China has achieved great economic success over the last three decades and is now the world's second largest economy. Despite this success, the country is facing increasing social problems and challenges, such as social inequality (Bian, 2002; Wu & Li, 2005) and population ageing (Mai, Peng, & Chen, 2013; Peng, 2011). The declining fertility rate, which is largely a result of the “one-child” policy introduced in the 1970s, and increasing life expectancy have turned China into one of the most rapidly ageing countries in the world (Chen & Liu, 2009). According to UN projections, approximately 35% of the Chinese population will be aged 60 years or older in 2050 (Banister, Bloom, & Rosenberg, 2012). Migrant elderly comprise an increasingly large percentage of the elderly in cities. Their number has grown rapidly in recent years owing to the persistence of China's migration and ageing trends (Meng et al., 2004). As a new social phenomenon, they have also

received more and more social and political attention over these years. Due to the institutional constraints of the Hukou (household registration) system, however, migrant elderly are not entitled to full citizenship rights or the benefits enjoyed by local elderly, which leads to inequality in their living conditions and well-being (Ren, 2011).

So far very little attention has been paid in literature to the residential inequality between local and migrant elderly. But relevant studies show that the Hukou system as a major source of institutional inequality between locals and migrants in general has led to their housing inequality and residential segregation in cities (Huang & Jiang, 2009; Wang, Wang, & Wu, 2010; Wu, 2008). Specifically, these studies suggest that the locals primarily inhabit public and commercial housing in the city center, whereas the migrants are distributed over private rental housing, factory dormitories, construction sites, and urban villages, mostly at the urban fringe. In addition, the distribution patterns of both locals and migrants are not static but change over time. The spatial distribution of migrants in many cities exhibits a gradual outward shifting tendency from the traditional city center to the fringe (Wu, 2008). Similarly, urban expansion and downtown redevelopment in recent years have led to a decentralization trend in local population (He, 2010). These dynamic changes are expected to have a

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substantial influence on the residential segregation between locals and migrants including their older subcategories.

The implication of residential segregation between local and migrant elderly for their well-being has hardly been studied. So far, well-being theories have been developed from philosophical, sociological, and psychological perspectives, but rarely from geographical and urban planning perspectives. Well-being related resources are primarily operationalized as individual resources referring to income, socio-economic status, health, and social networks (Diener, 2009; Nieboer, Lindenberg, Boomsma, & Van Bruggen, 2005). Little is known, however, about the geographical well-being resources associated with residential environments, such as the availability of and accessibility to certain well-being related resources including facilities, services, opportunities, healthy and safe environments, and supportive social relationships (Addae-Dapaah, 2008; Hao et al., 2011; Massey, Condran, & Denton, 1987). Even less knowledge is available on the specific well-being resources for the elderly, and the well-being implications of residential segregation. It is expected that residential segregation might lead to unequal access to these geographical well-being resources (Bullard, 1995), which might further exert unequal well-being effects on local and migrant elderly. Given the declining health conditions, physical capabilities, and mobility, and the limited income after retirement, the elderly face more difficulties in overcoming negative consequences of segregation compared to younger adults. This might seriously jeopardize the well-being of the segregated elderly.

This paper aims to analyze the residential segregation between the local and the migrant elderly and its implications on their access to geographical resources and their well-being in central Shanghai over the time period 2000–2010. Shanghai was selected for this study because it has a higher rate of population aging than any other large city in China (about 23.4% of the local population was aged over 60 years in 2010) (Chai, 2010) and because of its role as a major migration destination for already many decades. In Section 2 (theoretical framework), relevant segregation studies and well-being theory are introduced, and the interrelationships of institutional inequality, residential segregation, resource distribution, and well-being distribution are elaborated upon. In Section 3 (methodology), the measures for defining different types of residential communities, and the specific assessment methods of the elderly's well-being, are discussed. The changes in residential segregation and well-being inequality between the local and migrant elderly are analyzed and interpreted in Section 4. Conclusions and discussion are presented in the final section.

2. Theoretical framework

In this section we first explain how the Hukou system as a unique institutional system in Chinese context has resulted in the institutional inequality and residential segregation between locals and migrants (including the older subcategory) and how the local-migrant residential segregation affects their access to geographical well-being resources. Thereafter, a well-being theory for the elderly is introduced, which links various geographical well-being resources with elderly people's well-being.

2.1. Institutional inequality and local-migrant residential segregation in cities

As a unique Chinese institution, the Hukou system plays a key role in local-migrant inequality in cities (Liu, 2005; Logan, Bian, & Bian, 1999). The Hukou system was introduced in the 1950s to restrict rural–urban migration and to maintain social order in cities. Individuals were required to be registered and remain in

only one place of regular residence, holding either a local urban or a local rural Hukou. However, differences in Hukou status are associated with different rights and welfare provisions. This thus divides the Chinese population into a favored sector with full citizenship rights (urban residents with a local urban Hukou), and a marginal sector with fewer and more transient rights (rural population with a local rural Hukou) (Logan, Fang, & Zhang, 2009). Since the 1980s, the government has started to encourage migration and to facilitate economic growth, inter alia by gradually relaxing the rigid Hukou system. This relaxation has resulted into a massive influx of migrants into megacities like Shanghai and Beijing, however, except those wealthier and better-educated migrants, the greater majority of migrants are not granted local urban Hukou rights. Thus, Hukou's separation effect on locals (native urban residents and previous migrants who now hold a local urban Hukou) and migrants (migrant urban residents without a local urban Hukou) remains both potent and intact (Chan & Buckingham, 2008), shaping a new form of inequality not between urban and rural areas, but especially within megacities.

The institutional inequality due to the Hukou system is also reflected in the housing system, creating local-migrant housing inequality and residential segregation in cities (Huang & Jiang, 2009; Li, 2009; Logan et al., 1999, 2009; Wu, 2002, 2004, 2008; Wu & Li, 2005). Although since 1988 the urban housing reform has gradually introduced market mechanisms into China's socialist housing allocation system, the current housing system is still a quasi-market situation, in which socialist institutions such as Hukou are still functioning (Logan et al., 2009). Prior to 1999, the dominant route for urban residents to obtain housing was through a system of low-rent welfare housing distributed either by work units (state-owned enterprises) or by municipal governments (Wu, 2004). This urban welfare housing system, however, did not apply to the migrants. Since the end of 1999, the provision of all welfare housing (both work unit and municipal public housing) was ended, and sitting tenants (local urban residents) can choose to buy out the property right of their public housing at highly subsidized prices. However, migrants cannot acquire either the use right or ownership of municipal or work-unit public housing directly. Meanwhile, the locals who have purchased their public housing are allowed to sell them on the private market at a profit, which allows them to trade up on the housing hierarchy (Huang & Jiang, 2009). Thus, during this privatization process, the initial local-migrant inequality in accessing public housing has resulted in larger inequality in housing conditions and wealth accumulation. Moreover, after 1999 many state work units still offer housing subsidies to their local employees for purchasing commercial housing, which however are not available for migrants. Thus, migrants can only obtain their housing through market mechanisms. Still, they face institutionalized discrimination. In theory they may purchase commercial housing in the cities, but bank mortgages are not available to them (Wu, 2002). In the secondary housing market, participation generally requires a local Hukou, although theoretically migrants can purchase housing there after completing a lengthy process of official approval (Wu, 2004). Subsidized commercial housing for low- and middle-income families (the Economic and Comfortable Housing) is also reserved for local urban residents only.

Consequently, the rental housing in the housing market and factory dormitories, which are mainly located in peripheral areas, remain the key housing choices for migrants without a local Hukou (Logan et al., 2009; Wu, 2002). Compared to the locals who mostly live in the old housing district and work-unit compounds in city centers, the migrants are segregated in dilapidated areas of city centers and in migrant enclaves in the peripheries. As shown above, Hukou as the unique institutional system in China has largely limited the housing and locational choices of

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