



Socio-spatial restructuring in Shanghai: Sorting out where you live by affordability and social status[☆]



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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the dramatic shift in Shanghai's socio-spatial landscapes in the postreform China. Supported by the recent population census, one percent sample survey, and other socioeconomic statistics, this paper posits that a socioeconomically segregated metropolis has emerged in Shanghai: It is an individual's social status and the affordability of certain areas that determines where one can live. As such, a highly segregated socio-spatial structure has emerged in Shanghai driven not only by global forces, but also by developers and the state, as well as the associated institutional change. The findings of this paper calls for the Shanghai municipal government to review its property-led redevelopment approach, and regulate its policies for suburban industrialization and central city gentrification. This aims to diminish the social damage inherent in an increasingly segregated city.

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"In Shanghai, the residents in the inner city speak English, the residents in the mid-ring areas speak Mandarin, and only the residents in the outer circle speak Shanghai dialect"

[a popular saying in Shanghai¹]

Introduction

The above saying, though perhaps rather exaggerated, captures well both popular opinion and current trends in residential differentiation in Shanghai. With residents being forced to move to the outskirts of the city, sorted by their income and social status, there is legitimacy to this saying. As this sorting has occurred, more and more foreign executives and other well paid staff of multinational companies have moved to inner city areas, working in the financial sector in the CDB and Lujiazou and Pudong. Meanwhile, richer Chinese citizens who have migrated to Shanghai have chosen to live in the 'middle ring' area, between the CBD and the outskirts.

This paper investigates how Shanghai's socio-spatial landscapes have been dramatically altered in post-reform China. Using the recent population census, one percent sample survey, and other socioeconomic statistics, this paper demonstrates how a highly segregated socio-spatial structure has emerged in Shanghai.

Since Deng Xiaoping introduced the "getting rich quickly is glorious" ideology, privilege and actual choice in consumption has been available to the wealthy. Despite this, however, consumption choice can still be limited, even for those who have savings in the realm of a million yuan. This is not only the result of a surging housing market, but also of rapid socio-spatial change that is leading to highly segregated communities divided by affordability and social status. All the while, long time Shanghai residents have been displaced outwards, through resettlement programs and other similar movements.

As the largest and most developed city in China, Shanghai has experienced dramatic changes and a drastic reshaping of its socio-spatial structure since it was listed as one of China's most open areas along the coast in 1992. Sky-rocketing housing prices have caused Shanghai to have one of the lowest rates of homeownership among the 40 major Chinese cities in 2012.² Meanwhile, the role of hukou and danwei in Shanghai residents' locational choices for housing is becoming less important; it is now income that determines a citizen's neighborhood. This is especially true for

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¹ http://www.360doc.com/content/06/09/10/15/7579_203804.shtml.

² <http://news.cnfol.com/120608/101,1277,12542334,00.shtml>.

lower income households, whose options have been reduced dramatically and who have been forced to move out of their downtown homes.

Such changes in Shanghai's socio-spatial structure contrast starkly with Shanghai under Mao. In fact, Chinese cities under Mao had few socio-spatial disparities in comparison with their capitalist counterparts (French & Hamilton, 1979). As was common in Western urban development, Shanghai is now experiencing the problems of social polarization and spatial segregation. The driving forces and mechanisms, however, appear to differ from the Western experience.

Understanding of urban socio-spatial restructuring is a recurrent research theme within many disciplines, including urban geography and urban sociology (Hamnett, 1998; Marcuse & van Kempen, 2000; Musterd & Ostendorf, 1998; Walker, 2001). Recently, the research focus has shifted from personal characteristics (e.g. demographic and socio-economic data) to institutional and cultural practices (Wu & Li, 2005). The early body of research on urban spatial differentiation mainly focused on cities in the USA, where the early patterns of residential division and segregation were an outcome of local economic and spatial factors (Wu & Li, 2005). While suburban districts grew, the poor were trapped in the segregated parts of declining industrial areas due to persisting discrimination (Massey & Denton, 1993) and declining economic opportunities (Wilson, 1997). More recent works link local socio-spatial restructuring to the impact of globalization (Chen & Sun, 2007; Marcuse & van Kempen, 2000). There is a consensus among scholars that the processes of urban socio-spatial differentiation must be analyzed within a framework of national and regional conditions, since local cultures, traditions and mentalities, as well as specific historical circumstances, may lead to different patterns of differentiation (Stenning, 1997).

Socio-spatial differentiation in the former centrally planned economies of Central and Eastern Europe has also garnered recent research attention (Brade, Herfert, & Wiest, 2009; Hirt & Stanilov, 2007; Lowe & Tsenkova, 2003; Sykóra, 1999; Weclawowicz, 1998). Extensive privatization in the urban housing sector and reform of the state sector in these countries has altered the economic structure and provision of urban housing. There has been a recurrent debate since the early 1990s as to what extent gentrification, urban marginalization and secluded, exclusive forms of housing will affect future urban life in post-Socialist cities (Zhang, 2002).

With the advent of globalization and the transition toward a market-oriented economy, China has witnessed profound social and economic changes in recent times. Urban development studies of some of the social and economic changes wrought by this transition focus on the influx of migrant workers. Rural migrants of varied origins are typically specialized in particular activities and businesses. As such, the spatial concentration of rural migrants has resulted in the formation of many migrant villages (Gu & Shen, 2003). Recent changes in socio-spatial structuring have been driven by more complicated and diversified forces, creating more drastic changes than previously experienced.

The socio-economic class differentiation, due to the 'getting rich is glorious' policy and marketization of the urban housing sector, has reinforced the role of the market as the prevailing force in the process of reconstructing social space. It is now an urban household's income level that is the primary factor in the choice of residence (Gu & Shen, 2003). As a result, polarization has emerged among different social classes, and urban neighborhoods have become more classified by social status and income levels. Elite districts and villa suburbs have appeared around the fringes of cities while gated communities have become common in urban China (Yang, 2006). On the other end of the spectrum, migrant villages have also appeared in urban areas (such as the Zhejiang

village and Xinjiang village in Beijing: Chen, 2004). In addition, many disadvantaged local urban residents, such as jobless workers who were laid off by their former state-owned enterprises or those living in poverty, are confined to specific urban areas (Chen, Hao, & Stephens, 2010). This new social segmentation and spatial segregation is crucial in shaping the future of Chinese cities (Li, Wu, & Liu, 2004; Tian, Liu, & Zhang, 2002).

The many adverse forces accompanying the evolution of urban social spatial structuring have led to the emergence of urban social indicators similar to those found in the West. Residential segregation, residential differentiation, space deprivation and community reconstruction have emerged within the socio-spatial structure of Shanghai. Due to the over-emphasis on the gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate over the years, Chinese municipal governments have paid little attention to social justice and the welfare of disadvantaged groups (Yang, 2006). Chinese scholars call for more research attention to be directed to this topic so as to bring socio-spatial justice and order which are named 'moral advancement' in the urban studies (Ma, 2007; Pannell, 2007; Smith, 2000). These scholars and the central government authority call for locals to adopt modern governance concepts such as 'people-oriented or people foremost', 'harmonious society building' and 'better city, better life'. Despite this, Chinese cities have become more polarized now than they have been in modern history, mostly due to the forces striving to correct polarization having failed to have a significant impact.

Though academic research on socio-spatial restructuring in China is now rapidly growing, much of this scholarship covers either reviews of Western literature or general, rather superficial discussions of the phenomenon in China. Meanwhile, most Chinese publications on this topic are very broad with limited depth of analysis. Chai (2000) for instance investigated the urban social spatial problem of traffic congestion; Feng and Zhou (2003) discussed the influence of economic restructuring and population movement, its effect on the development and polarization of large Chinese coastal cities' suburban communities, and discussed the evolution of urban social space in the aspect of macro policies. Wu (2001) has used Nanjing as a case study to investigate the social stratification of urban residential districts, as well as the phenomenon of spatial segregation and interlacing, while Zhang, Liu, and Meng (2005) probed the relationship between locational advantage value of residential environments and residential pricing, as well as the residential decisions on location. Some very meaningful research on urban socio-spatial restructuring in China is included in works on gated communities published in English-language journals (e.g., Wu & He, 2005; Huang & Low, 2008; Pow, 2009).

The most relevant works on the issue have been done by Chen and Sun (2007) and Wu and Li (2005). The latter developed a conceptual framework of the processes of socio-spatial differentiation. Such a framework includes the following four dimensions: historical legacies (of inequalities that existed prior to the socialist city and the inequalities forged under socialism); the fragmentation of the structure of housing provision after urban housing reform; the market economy of urban development, globalization and economic restructuring; and rural-urban migration. Based on street committee level comparisons, they conclude that a resident's level of educational attainment, occupational and working status (manufacturing vs. tertiary sector, working active vs. retired), and household registration status (concentration of rural-to-urban migrants) contributed to an obvious differentiation of social spaces in Shanghai. Other relevant work includes Ding's (2004) Pudong case study, which revealed how an increased disparity in incomes helped contribute to the increasing differentiation and evolving social space. Two other relevant and scholarly sound works are Shanghai's Taipingqiao case study by Yang and Chang (2007) and the redevelopment case study by He and Wu (2005). The latter

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