



Uneven development, urbanization and production of space in the middle-scale region based on the case of Jiangsu province, China



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ABSTRACT

The space in the process of urbanization is undergoing a great transition from physical space to social space. The relations between society and space become more important and complicated than ever. As a critical social theory, production of space means that urbanization has been reshaped by social factors or forces like capital, power and class, so that the urban space finally becomes their production and process. Based on socio-spatial dialectic, the main methodology of spatial production, urban space (re)shapes social relations and processes. The different spatial scales have and continuously produce the different social relations. In the researches about production of space, little work has been done on the index system to assess the extent of production of space and to analyze middle-scale region. This article designs a set of simple index system to reflect the spatial influences of capital, power as well as class, and chooses Jiangsu Province as a typical case because of its rapid and differential urbanization to indicate the process of spatial production from 2000 to 2015. In this index system, capital is represented by fixed-asset investment, real estate investment and foreign direct investment; power is represented by the index of the constructed urban land area; the index reflecting class is the urban-rural income ratio. Based on the analysis of these changing indexes, this paper finds that urbanization in Jiangsu is hybrid process: the forces from capital and power greatly contribute to rapid urbanization and high urbanization level, however, the gaps among the three sub-regions in the province and rural-urban income inequality have not decreased accordingly. Conversely, these gaps enlarge in some periods. This kind of urbanization pattern is characterized by large-scale spatial expansion, and is driven by capital and power, but there are many latent social risks and spatial inequality. In the process of spatial production, space and society interact, entangle and (re)shape the pattern of urbanization in the end.

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1. Introduction

Since 2000, owing to unprecedented rapid and large-scale urbanization in human history, urbanization in the world, especially in some developing countries like China, has drawn more attention and has been studied by many scholars from the different areas (Barney, 2006; Bloom, Canning, & Fink, 2008; Chan, 2010; Chen, Liu, & Lu, 2016; Friedmann, 2006; Long, Li, Liu, Woods, & Zou, 2012; UNDESA, 2012; Wu, 2016). The kind of urbanization has rendered the spatial issue more remarkable than ever because

producing and exploiting space to the maximum extent is the most important characteristic of urbanization, particularly in the capitalist time and world (Lin, 2007; Harvey, 1985, 2012). This process of urbanization is actually a process of production of space whereas production of space and urbanization are just two sides of a coin.

From “production in space” to “production of space”, epistemology or philosophy on space has been greatly, even radically changed since 1970s, and space has become a key word and hot topic in social sciences, humanities and other fields (Foucault, 1977, 1980, 1986; Harvey, 1973; Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1989). This kind of change has influenced society and everyday life, including urbanization. Space is no longer regarded as a dead, unchanging and empty object, or a physical or abstract factor or container without social connections or relations in the classic philosophers' views,

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including Newton, Kant and Marx; on the contrary, space is a production of social life, but more importantly, it is a subject which is never-ending, changing, (re)creating and (re)shaping society (Foucault, 1977, 1986; Lefebvre, 1991). Space implies interrelations, interactions and multiplicity, and most importantly, it is socially constructed and “always in the process of being made” (Massey, 2005). It is these new values and assessments on space that produce such a long-term tide studying production of space over the last four decades.

Since the masterpiece *Production of Space* (French edition published in the 1970s, English edition in 1991) written by Henri Lefebvre was published, Lefebvre and his followers have continuously developed this theory to integrate production of space, uneven geographical development into urban issues or urbanization research (Castells, 1977; Harvey, 1982; Soja, 1989). According to the critique and sublation to Lefebvre's thought, scholars developed some new frameworks in order to focus on key issues or methodologies (Gottdiener, 1985; Olds, 1995; Unwin, 2000). Planetary urbanization characterized by production of space, is put forward, which emphasized on the intertwined temporal and spatial scales and their impacts on global urbanization (Brenner, 2013; Brenner & Schmid, 2015). There is a dialectic, multi-scalar relation between urbanization and production of space. On the one hand, rapid urbanization not only changes the physical space including built environment, land use and landscapes and so on, but also reshapes the imaginative and mental space. For example, from the countryside to the city, spatial transformation often makes it difficult for immigrants to build up a belonging feeling and identity like their home in the rural areas. On the other hand, space itself is an important driving force and producer to produce and push urbanization. It is inconceivable that urbanization lacks a spatial base or support.

There are many kinds of scales between urbanization and production of space (Brenner, 2000). These different social, spatial and temporal scales interact and intertwine (Cash et al., 2006; Shen, 2005; Ye, Chen, Chen, & Guo, 2014). As for space, it can be generally divided into some scales from place, city, region to country and the world according to spatial size and spatial level, or three types of macro, middle and micro (Gregory, Johnson, Pratt, Watts, & Whatmore, 2009). There are both differences and connections between these scales which often lead to scale up and down. Many scholars have studied macro-scale urbanization and production of space, which focus on capital circulation, spatial fix and uneven geographical development using the methodology of political economic analysis based on Marx's theories (Harvey, 1982, 1996, 2010; Quaini, 1982; Smith, 1991; Soja, 2010). On micro-scale production of space, the scholars have carried out some frameworks to integrate land use, spatial production and policies, and summarize the mechanism of production of space based on the case of university town (Li, Li, & Wang, 2014; Ye, Chen, Chen, & Guo, 2014). On the city level, Paris, Los Angeles, Baltimore and Shanghai, as the typical urbanizing cases in the world, are often adopted to explain the process of production of space mainly based on the approaches of art and text interpretation (Harvey, 2000, 2003; Huang, 2004; Soja, 1996).

Compared to lots of works concerning about micro-macro-scale and city-level researches, little work has been done about spatial production of middle-scale region, especially the region like a province. Besides, the theory of production of space is very abstract and ambiguous, so more importantly, it is a key but difficult issue how to evaluate and judge the extent and degree of production of space. In order to deal with the two problems, this paper tries to design a simple set of indexes to assess regional production of space based on a typical case of Jiangsu, a rapidly urbanizing province in China.

2. Methodology: the evaluation indexes on production of space

Uneven development is an important issue in economics, which reflects the complicated relations between market, trade and state or regional development (Harris, 2008; Krugman, 1981). It has been a hot topic in geography, especially in Marxist geography since 1970s (Gregory et al., 2009; Smith, 1982). The basic attitude to capitalism is radically different facing uneven development between economists and Marxist geographers. The former doesn't deny capitalism and often thinks uneven development as the result of marketing force and free trade, but the latter regards uneven development as the outcome of capitalist system or Neoliberalism. Therefore, Marxist geographers are often critical and radical, and intend to uncover the driving force of capitalism. Production of space is the best tool or theory for this work.

The theory of production of space is basically different from the old theories about space. It integrated the past theories about space into the new temporal and social-spatial context, together with capitalism, finally developed a new kind of theory. According to this new theory, space is a tool, a backdrop and a product in the whole process of social (space) production. As Cresswell (2013) clearly summarized:

“Space appears at every stage in the production of social reality. It is the context for production (everything has to happen in space); it is a tool in production (we use space to produce particular forms of social relation), and it is a product (capitalism produces its own spaces through processes such as uneven development). Space is suddenly everywhere and appears to have considerably more theoretical power than it did in spatial science”.

As a critical social or urban theory, “production of space generally means that the urban landscapes and spatial structures have been reshaped by political, economic, and social factors, mainly including capital, power, and class, so that the urban space finally becomes their production and process” (Ye et al., 2014). This concept extends the core idea of production of space, “(social) space is (social) production” (Lefebvre, 1991), and here “social” is a concept in a broad sense, including political, economic, (narrow-sense) social and cultural and other factors or human behaviors. “Social processes produce scales and scales affecting the operation of social processes. Social processes and space – and hence scales – mutually intersect, constitute, and rebound upon one another in an inseparable chain of determinations” (Gregory et al., 2009). This is so-called socio-spatial dialectic emphasizing dialectic interactions between time, space, and society (Soja, 1980, 1989). These scales can be further subdivided. According to this methodology, “social” concept can be mainly divided into three parts: political, economic, and (narrow-sense) social, which correspond to three main factors: power, capital, and class respectively (Ye et al., 2014). Politics is a process that all kinds of power struggle and play. Capital is the most important factor for economic actions, especially in the capitalist system, and it flows over different areas and makes uneven space (Christophers, 2011; Harvey, 1982, 2001). Class in society occupies a very important position similar to that of capital in economy. Urbanization produces the different spaces for the different classes such as the living space between the low-income earners and high-income earners, which space is usually used to separate the poor from the rich (Lefebvre, 1996, 2003). Totally speaking, urbanization is a process that these three factors and the urban space interact and intertwine.

Once the relatively important factors are selected and verified, evaluating them becomes a necessary step. However, most papers

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