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Urbanisation in China – Patterns and Governance

Professor Stephan Feuchtwang
*Emeritus Professor, Department of
Anthropology, LSE*

Professor Athar Hussain
*Professorial Research Fellow, Institute of
Global Affairs, LSE*

Professor Fulong Wu
*Bartlett Professor of Planning,
University College London*

Professor Kent Deng
Chair, LSE

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Work Programme 5
Community Development

For some twenty years in the PRC there has been simultaneously,

1.the creation of an urban welfare state with the shift away from work-unit welfare,

2.a private property led urban growth regulated by planning, and

3.community building as social management,

a triple programme inaugurated through Residents' Representative Committees in 1989.

Residents' Representative Committees, with their own offices and cultural activities centres, and their volunteer/appointed stair or lift well, floor, apartment block etc representatives are subject to the following:-

District (qu) Plan,
Street (jiedao) management targets
and are run jointly with a
Ministry of Civil Affairs welfare service
station.

They work closely with the local Party branch, its youth league and retired cadre residents to mobilise volunteers, including elected representative residents.

Listed functions of residents' committees, from a Kunming RC:

Party mass education;
Assisting the disabled;
Maintaining peace and order;
Population and family planning;
Environmental beautification;
Hygiene;
Help and relief;
Activities, employment training, social insurance

To these we must add from our studies of 20 RCFs in four cities the time consuming work of

Population surveillance, registration and certification.

Mediating disputes among residents and of residents' disputes with suppliers of services and utilities

Collecting and transmitting grievances in one direction, policies and advice in the other

Raising funds from eg parking fees and business rental and management fees to pay security guards, cleaners, and gardeners.

For salaries of elected representatives and staff, and for funds to help the unemployed to retrain, job hunt, or to become self-employed they depend on the Street or District.

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They also work with

Police (surveillance, security, registration),

and in most cases with

Property managers (maintenance, security, cleaning) responsible to the Housing Management Bureau but which are private companies.

NB Nearly all urban estate is state owned.

Tenants have been encouraged to buy their properties and there is a large market for private ownership of the leasehold, but the surrounding fabric, lifts, stairwells and grounds are the responsibility of property management companies

The great majority of residents are untouched by any of these agencies except the last two, police and property management.

The poorer the resident the more likely to be involved with RCs, the richer with home owner associations, statutorily authorised since 2007.

Property management companies have a national organisation that can lobby central government. Home-owner associations link up less formally to advise each other.

Self-organised activities by residents:-

'Busybody' or 'intervening' self-styled retired women, a continuing tradition of supervising and doing fertility control and hygiene/civilisation work and some traffic control, that combines with Party organised volunteering to help the elderly and disabled and the children of those working late hours.

Musical, sporting, life-cultivating, formation dancing, familial, quasi-friendship, gaming (cards, majiang, badminton et al), uses of public spaces are also a continuing tradition, in the now well provided open spaces.

Two indicative vignettes: A rotation of retired women and men cooking for each other and for those who cannot, using the facilities of the Residents' Committee in one site in Kunming. A three-woman dumpling stall as entrepreneurial community focus in a Shanghai street.

City life and its transport allows for family and association links across community territories.



Destruction of community is the norm of development and planning:-

Community was already there in, for example the model Chongqing inner city community (shequ) consisting of old work unit housing from which few had moved. But this is exceptional. The village that is on the outskirts being incorporated into the city, its local temple (not a potential tourist attraction) and the history it focuses, and even the new housing residents have built for themselves are destroyed in planned development. Work-unit housing and old courtyard and alley housing are redeveloped and become expensive, next to units that remain undeveloped in the possession of retired workers who rent rooms to migrant workers.

Resettlement in the same area of residence is an acknowledged ideal, rarely realised.





Chongqing

- A pioneer rental housing project: Minxin
- Inhabited from 2010, studied 2013









New housing provides what everyone wants: more space and internal facilities for washing, waste and cooking. They are usually willing to move for this. But they also want to live near available work, good schools and hospitals.

Home ownership and private renting has become the norm, except for the giant public rental schemes in Chongqing with the option of purchase after five years.

Exclusion of the poorest and of rural migrant labour is another norm:-

As in London, truly affordable social housing for those on low income is in short supply. Resort of the poorest, including migrant labourers to private renting from old work unit housing and urban village house owners.

Shanghai



Outer city







resulting publications by SF

1. 'Introduction: urban appearances' in Jiang, Jiehong (2015) *An Era without Memories; Chinese contemporary photography on urban transformation*. London: Thames & Hudson pp. 10-25

2. (with Paula Morais and Zhang Hui) 'The formation of governmental community and the closure of housing classes' in Francois Gipouloux (ed) *China's Urban Century; governance, environment and socio-economic imperatives*. London: Edward Elgar 2015 pp 195-212

3. 'Governing Chongqing' in John Calabrese (ed) *Governing Megacities 2015*
<http://www.mei.edu/content/community-and-governance-chongqing-china>

4. 'Urban Neighbourhoods' in Kevin Latham (ed) *Routledge Handbook of Chinese Culture and Society* forthcoming

Broader issues currently being developed by SF:-

The public roles of women in urban 'communities' (shequ): a gender division of labour and gender discrimination

Electoral democracy one small part of the broader dynamics of feedback, discrimination and response in policy formation and implementation.

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