Urban Redevelopment and the Structuring of Spatial Inequality in China

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Abstract: Urban redevelopment in China has opened up new spaces for the articulation of social distinction, as well as new configurations of social inequality. This article offers a historical, conceptual and theoretical approach to understanding these configurations, based on the continuation of socialist-era inequalities and the emergence of new inequalities based on neoliberalism. Using insights from Pierre Bourdieu, I argue that *suzhi*, as well as the institutional legacies of the *hukou* and *danwei* systems, can help us understand how, and why, the benefits of redevelopment are unequally distributed amid changes to the built environment.

China's rapid, post-reform urbanization process has been the subject of considerable interest from academics, policymakers and popular media. Indeed, the tremendous growth and modernization of Chinese cities over recent decades is considered among the most tangible signs of the country's economic achievements. However, relatively little research has sought to address the social consequences of Chinese urban redevelopment – that is, the recreation of urban spaces with the aim of improvement or upgrading. Previous literature which aims to understand redevelopment from a social-theoretical perspective remains something of a niche within a niche. This is an unfortunate oversight, as redevelopment raises many questions about the social character of urban spaces and the people who inhabit them.

Specifically, this article, asks how urban redevelopment can be implicated in post-reform era social and spatial inequality. At the same time, it also considers how existing and emerging configurations of social inequality inform practices of redevelopment. My hypothesis is that redevelopment can be understood as a site of social division; one which braids historical patterns of inequality present under socialism with more recent inequalities characteristic of neoliberalism. As market-oriented redevelopment paves the way for segregated and status-defining spaces, these spaces adhere to a new logic of social reclassification and new terms of division which nevertheless remain continuous with older hierarchies from the Mao era. Throughout this article, my intention is to argue that redevelopment is deeply embroiled in symbolic relationships between people and places. What emerges is a portrait of a social landscape where the assignment of disadvantaged symbolic traits become translatable into exclusion, marginalization and segregation in a changing spatial environment.

In this article I will use the theories of Pierre Bourdieu in order to analyze social inequality in China. Such theories can help trace the perpetuation of social hierarchies amid seemingly profound periods of change, such as China's transition from strict socialism to a form of market-oriented capitalism overseen by a predominate state. Other applications of Bourdieu's concepts to societies in transition (see Rehbein 2017, Eichholz et al 2013, Erel 2010, Szelenyi 2013) attest to the credibility of this approach. As Bourdieu also reminds us repeatedly in his corpus, distributions of capital are not random, and neither are positions in social space. The same can be

said of positions in *physical* space, as is the case in China which is currently undergoing an unprecedented process of urbanization. Patterns of spatial distribution within this rapidly changing environment should not be naturalized as a matter of chance, or de-politicized outcomes of "free" market activities, but rather as contingent byproducts of earlier inequalities. They should also not merely be attributed to authoritarianism, corruption or abuse of power. As in other struggles, the volume and composition of capital possessed by different social agents influences access to valued positions, which includes various forms of symbolic capital associated with urban occupation.

In the pages ahead, I first introduce some of Bourdieu's theories which I believe are relevant to understanding post-reform Chinese society, particularly those related to symbolic power. Following these theories, I will discuss *suzhi* ("quality") as a language of symbolic classification, with special attention to its discursive use in connecting (supposed) traits and dispositions with place of origin and urban spatial belonging. Next, I discuss the *danwei* and *hukou* systems and their role in the production of space, both historically and in the present moment. The legacies of these institutions inform urban morphologies in the post-Mao era and bear on the symbolic classification of subjects, as expressed by *suzhi*. Taken together, the *suzhi-danwei-hukou* axis represents the basic coordinates of the "taken for granted" social world, wherein symbolic power is exercised. After this comes a discussion of urban redevelopment and its implications for the remaking of social space, as well as physical space along lines of social division. Finally, I will turn to accounts of how redevelopment inflicts itself upon subjects and groups which fall short of valorized standards.

Symbolic Power in Chinese Society

One of the major insights of Bourdieu's sociology was that the volume and structure of one's economic, social and cultural capital accounts for one's position in "social space" (to use his terminology), which he saw reflected in the profession, education and conditions of upbringing of individual subjects and groups (see Bourdieu 1984: 109-16). Furthermore, the "objective conditions" associated with each position generate and reflect a durable set of socially-valued tastes, habits and embodied dispositions known as the habitus. The habitus is also an internalization of the social structure, including one's place therein, with each place having its own attendant constellation of affect, preferences and behaviors.

The unequal distribution of capital, translated into behaviors and embodied properties organized by the habitus, forms the foundation of Bourdieu's theory of inequality. Bourdieu expounded this theory at length in *Distinction* (1984), yet its genealogy can be traced back to his early research in Algeria; where he observed the persistence of habitus in the transformation from a traditional peasant economy to modern capitalism (Bourdieu 1977: 4-5, 43-4). In later Bourdieu writings, of course, we find an elaborated theory of social reproduction explained through the conversion and transmission of various capital forms. Later scholars added to this formulation by introducing symbolic and historical dimensions of inequality which liberalism *invisiblizes*, while also rejecting Bourdieu's assumption that classes are distinguishable solely by different compositions of capital (Jodhka et al 2018: 18). For capital to have social *meaning* – to become sensible, intelligible, legible – requires a universe of symbols with its own schemes of classification, ordering and interpretation.

Bourdieu further explained that positions in social space are not random or accidental, but largely the product of symbolic struggles to define what is common-sensical and legitimate in

social reality (Bourdieu 1989: 21, 246-7). Although this struggle is often hidden, obscured and unacknowledged, the resulting practices of symbolic domination are what ultimately produce social inequalities, rather than physical coercion or violence. The apparently self-evident significance of social actions when filtered through the habitus, as an internalization of the social structure, help to produce a shared "commonsense" understanding of the objective world. Part of this experience is a relatively standardized "sense of place" in the hierarchy of social relations. This sense is reinforced through patterns of behavior and perception, known as lifestyles.

As systematic products of habitus, lifestyles function as sites for both the production of, and struggle over, the social qualification and sorting of individual agents, groups and varieties of practice (Bourdieu 1984: 168). Bourdieu writes that different lifestyles correspond to different configurations of capital, mediated through the habitus into behavior, which individual agents use to obtain distinction (Bourdieu 1984: 247-257). In Bourdieu's view, struggles to define "the good life" are also struggles to determine which class (or class fraction) can best define and embody the terms of dominant discourse to which all of society is subjugated. Later studies modify this, by pointing out the multiplicity of discourses which exist in society, some of which are more or less influential based on their attachment to different classes (Jodhka et al 2018: 24). Such phenomena can be observed in China, where claims to urban housing – including legal claims as well as claims to an elite urban culture – are given more or less legitimacy according to certain symbolic characteristics of claimants.

The relationship between lifestyles of the dominant and dominated classes is defined by an "objective and subjective distance from the world, with its material constraints and temporal urgencies" (Bourdieu 1984: 377). Bourdieu wrote of this relationship, albeit in somewhat different terms, as early as his work in Algeria, where he observed that the ability to plan "realistically" for the future was strongly associated with success under conditions of capitalism (Bourdieu 1977: 50-54). The lifestyles of the dominated are, among other supposedly inferior qualities, lifestyles of necessity which lead to "resignation to necessity" and "a taste for necessity"[2] (Bourdieu 1984: 381). Such lifestyles, as well as the individuals who embody them, are denigrated by those in higher positions and the supposed inferiority of dominated groups only further justifies their dispossession (Bourdieu 1984: 385-97).

Such expressions of lifestyles have validity in China as well, although here "necessity" takes further meaning: it becomes additionally counterposed with the state's social-engineering priorities. In the field of housing, high-quality urban property ownership entails the possession of a certain high-status lifestyle; and these phenomena become bound up with the state's desire to create disciplined, "high-value" middle-class subjects who are "autonomous" in so far as they become active participants in the economy, and "responsible" in the sense that they maintain the political status quo (Tomba 2014: 145). This project continues to play out in China's rapidly expanding and upgrading cities, where the government's priorities are social stability and economic growth. Specific to the issue of urban development, the creation of "high-value" classes concurrently summons forth demarcated spaces for social distinction, demonstrated through lifestyle.

Exemplary Chinese classes – the upper and middle classes – exists in opposition to stigmatized groups such as the urban poor and migrants, who are unable to partake in valued lifestyles as they lack both the financial means and the traits (i.e. embodied capital) necessary to do so. They "do not have what it takes" to enjoy the full benefits of urbanization, or a privileged place therein, because the traits they inherited are less socially valuable and this lack of value is inscribed within a larger symbolic universe of meaning (see Jodhka et al 2018: 11, 24). By lacking "important"

traits, it becomes easier to denigrate them; to deny them access to socially valued spaces. When this symbolic universe localizes in the field of housing, we can see why certain groups are elevated, supported and championed while others are dispossessed and displaced.

Symbolic power relations define what, and who, is valued through the assignment (or deprivation) of valued traits. This is also the basis for the enacting of symbolic dominance. Symbolic relations are reinforced through practice and perception, which reflect possession (or dispossession) of capital in Bourdieu's expanded sense: i.e. valued resources inclusive of money and property, titles and credentials, powerful friends and relatives, and knowledge of sanctified cultural (Bourdieu 1984: *passim*, Bourdieu 1986). Bourdieu distinguishes between several species of capital in his writings, yet these ultimately collapse into symbolic capital once they are acknowledged as such (Bourdieu 1989). In a later article Bourdieu writes:

> Owing to the fact that *symbolic capital is nothing other than economic or cultural capital when it is known and recognized*, when it is known through the categories of perception that it imposes, symbolic relations of power tend to reproduce and to reinforce the power relations that constitute the structure of social space. More concretely, legitimation of the social world is not, as some believe, the product of a deliberate and purposive action of propaganda or symbolic imposition; it results, rather, from the fact that agents apply to the objective structures of the social world structures of perception and appreciation which are issued out of these very structures and which tend to picture the world as evident. (Bourdieu 1989: 21, emphasis added).

In the Chinese context, certain qualities are more highly prized according to the state's value rubric, and these qualities inform contemporary patterns of social inequality. Far from overturning Bourdieu's observation, stated above, that the "legitimation of the social world is not... the product of a deliberate and purposive action of propaganda or symbolic imposition," the Chinese state's fixation on "exemplary" standards rather corroborates his point: subjective experience makes the objective world seem completely evident. Under the influence of habitus and capital, as well as the inheritance of historical inequalities, we find that the most dominant fractions in Chinese society tend to promote a social order that favors the qualities they already possess, while simultaneously viewing the devaluation of traits found in stigmatized groups to be entirely natural (discussed further below). What's more, the dominant classes are also the most "naturally" skilled at appropriating, and embodying, a dominant discourse of "value" cultivated by the state. Here we see the embedment of symbolic domination which Jodhka and co-authors describe: "instead of socially constructed, it is regarded as being founded on natural reality because the traits are incorporated, as they have an integral component of the person under consideration" (2018: 25). In contemporary China we can observe this pattern in a range of fields, including those related to spatial inequality. The most advantageous spatial positions, which urbanization produces, are increasingly associated with those who are the most enterprising, the most flexible, the most disciplined, the most individualistic – in other words, "the best" within the symbolic universe of a state-led, bourgeois market-oriented economy.

Suzhi, or Symbolic Domination with Chinese Characteristics

In China today, one space where symbolic domination expresses itself most clearly is in the discourse on *suzhi* (素质). Usually translated as "quality," this English gloss fails to articulate the term's full spectrum of meanings. Recent analyses find that *suzhi* represents internalized, embodied qualities affected by one's upbringing, particularly with regard to education and social

environment (Anagnost 2004, Kipnis 2006, Sun 2013). In this relationship to early socialization and education, one could say that *suzhi* captures the "objective conditions," in the Bourdieusian sense, which are crucial to the constitution of the subjectivity. Yan (2003) states that *suzhi* "refers to the somewhat ephemeral qualities of civility, self-discipline and modernity. . . " as well as "a sense and sensibility of the self's value in the market economy" (Yan 2003: 494). By imposing an exemplary market-oriented, entrepreneurial ethos onto individual subjects, *suzhi* also organizes social groups according to a shared language of personal and national development (Yan 2003).

One conclusion that emerges from research into *suzhi* is that groups which are supposedly most lacking in "quality" happen to be those which most embody China's socialist past; a past characterized by irrationality, dependence, entitlement, poverty and backwardness. Of course, these are all qualities rejected by the modern, neoliberal condition. Those who embody such derogated qualities, to lessor or greater degree, experience disadvantages in the fields of housing and urban citizenship, as well as China's socio-economic reform project more broadly. In this way, *suzhi* becomes a tool for class-making and distinction across a range of social fields, housing included. In so far as *suzhi* status consists with earlier forms of disadvantage, it becomes a tool for the reproduction of social inequality.

In certain respects, *suzhi* operates as an analog to embodied cultural capital in that both are unequally distributed based on conditions of personal origin and the accumulation of refinement. Lack of *suzhi* is used to decry "deficiencies ranging from lack of formal schooling and low literacy to poor personal hygiene and table manners" that are usually identified with peasants and rural migrants who constitute the bulk of China's labor force (Sun 2013: 33). By contrast, those of urban origins, high levels of education and larger amounts of wealth are thought to have relatively more *suzhi*. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this analogy heightens the connections between *suzhi* and embodied capital: the acquisition of the latter being what Bourdieu describes as a personal endeavor that requires time, investment, a certain amount of privation and renunciation[3], as well as the means and sensibility to undertake such an endeavor (Bourdieu 1986).

With *suzhi* linked to a range of ranked properties, it also provides a schema for social ordering. This did not arise by accident. Chinese political leaders and intellectuals have deliberately "cultivated" the "quality" of the citizenry as a strategy to dampen social upheavals caused by economic modernization (Bakken 2000: 59-60). This occurred as the introduction of market reforms created a moral crisis for a population that suddenly lost faith in socialism. In 1982 former general secretary Hu Yaobang formally introduced the Party's self-imposed mission to improve material conditions through development of the economy, as well as the personal qualities of human subjects through education and social control[4] (Hu 1982). This theory was heavily influenced by prominent intellectuals such as Qian Xuesen and Sun Kaifei, who believed that the "scientification" of the social and moral order was necessary to prevent modernity from unleashing "chaos" (紊乱, *wenluan*). Despite the apparent utopianism of such theories, discriminations based on *suzhi* are often born by those who were disadvantaged by previous schemes of social engineering. The continuation of past inequalities, in modified forms, adds to the symbolic potency of *suzhi*. On the operationalization of *suzhi*, Kipnis (2006) writes:

> In popular usage, the notion of "lacking quality" is used to discriminate against rural migrants, litterbugs, the short, the nearsighted and the poorly dressed. Education reform is justified in terms of quality, and individuals of many backgrounds consume a dizzying variety of books, nutritional supplements, clothes, exercise equipment, medicine and educational programmes in the pursuit of quality for themselves

> and their children... the CCP increasingly claims its own legitimacy in terms of producing a strong nation by individually and collectively raising the quality of its citizens. (Kipnis 2006: 296)

Scholars have focused on *suzhi* as a neoliberal technology to extract surplus value from a disempowered underclass (Anagnost 2004, Anagnost 2008, Kipnis 2006, Kipnis 2007, Murphy 2004, Yan 2003, Sun 2013). Creating value through capitalist production was a top priority of the Party in the 1980s, when a popular *suzhi* discourse emerged from the premise that China's rural society constituted a tumorous mass of backward peasants whose "low quality" explained the country's lack of development (Kipnis 2006, Anagnost 2004). This narrative seems to have been remarkably successful at proving its own validity. Migrant laborers, for instance, have been known to speak of their plight in terms of *suzhi* (Sun 2013), though it is widely understood that "those who got rich first"[5] in the reform era occupied privileged positions before this transition.

In conjunction with the strategy of social control and development, official media has consistently portrayed the poor, particularly peasants, as "lazybones" (懒汉, *lanhan*) who would rather subsist on government handouts than work to lift themselves out of poverty (Wang 2019). This portrayal consists with a larger reform-era narrative that blames socialist-era institutions for depriving older workers of the opportunity to cultivate their self-management (Cho 2013: 169). By the 1990s, liberal thinkers such as Qin Hui also spoke of abiding patterns of peasant "dependency," from ancient times into the Mao era, as an impediment to modernization (Day 2013, ch.2). From this outlook arose a dominant ideology which prioritized self-directed, self-interested engagement in the economy and a liberal rights-based conception of citizenship. Those who do not embody these traits are considered flawed subjects.

Conditions of modernity promoted by elites, when combined with pro-market reform policies, also contribute to the derogation and devaluation of China's once-valorized working class, particularly those who remained attached to declining or failed state-owned enterprises (SOEs) following major layoffs of the 1990s. Among the working-classes, those who struggled without the "iron rice bowl" (铁饭碗, *tie fanwan*) of guaranteed employment, welfare and retirement benefits have experienced the sort of hysteresis which Bourdieu and co-authors (1999) document in *The Weight of the World* (also see Hardy 2008). This experience includes internalized self-blame over "falling behind," which is attributed to personal deficits rather than structural disadvantages. This is illustrated in Li's (2015a) ethnographic study of SOE employees who "failed" to take advantage of new economic opportunities in the private sector:

> ... the true ideal of the "workers' state" was never realized in reality. However, the abandonment of this ideal, politically, rhetorically, and practically, has removed the political and cultural veneer of equality from economic activities, destroyed the promise and hope it once offered, and ridicules the values and norms it used to convey. Mastery and craftsmanship are now under appreciated; commitment to work is meaningless and even laughable; and unlike the older generation of workers who could predict what their retired life, their pension, and their "cumulative achievements" would be like, this generation of workers does not know what will happen, not only decades from now, but five years or two years down the road, or even tomorrow... they also know very clearly that [their] factory is operating at a continuing loss and the only reason they still have jobs is because the state both pities and fears them. *All of these developments have forced workers to internalize the popular image created by the contemporary hegemonic discourse, bringing them much shame and pain.* (Li 2015a: 201-2, emphasis added).

When it comes to the level of practice, the rhetoric and trappings of *suzhi* help impose the terms of social reality writ large (see Bourdieu 1977a). Thus, it appears perfectly natural and reasonable when individuals who have "fallen behind" are found to be lacking the qualities privileged by holders of symbolic advantage. The power of *suzhi* in ordering contemporary social reality likely derives, at least in part, from its inherited relationship to pre-existing institutions of structured inequality. specifically, the work unit and household registration systems (discussed below). These institutions were also intended to produce certain idealized citizen-subjects who could realize the Party's agenda of developing the economy and ensuring social stability. The historical legacies of these institutions are highly entangled with conceptions of *suzhi* and also lend legitimacy to urban spatial inequalities which emerge through redevelopment.

Hukou, Danwei and Spatial Inequality

Two of the Party's most pervasive interventions into Chinese society can be found in the household registration (, *hukou*) and the work unit (单位, *danwei*) systems (henceforth referred to by their Chinese names). While the *danwei* is no longer a major structuring factor in Chinese society, a modified and relaxed *hukou* system continues to influence the opportunities and life-chances of all Chinese citizens. These institutions established the rigid hierarchies of Mao-era China and their terms continue to inform a range of inequalities today. As Tomba (2014) observes, these "social normative institutions... have greatly contributed to stratifying society along lines useful to the dominant socialist ideology (collectivization, class struggle, and the creation of 'cities of producers') on the one hand, while, on the other, organizing population and resources to achieve the important economic goals set by planners" (88). Despite changes over time, these institutions serve an important normative role in legitimizing the classification of people and places. In Bourdieusian terms, the impersonal operation of these systems helps establish their "objective" nature, and this in turn contributes to the unquestioned, durable reproduction of relations of domination[6] (Bourdieu 1977: 183-4). When institutional mechanisms become entangled with *suzhi*, prior relationships of inequality become more firmly entrenched.

The *hukou* system was introduced in the 1950s and classifies nearly all citizens as either rural or urban (农业 *nongye* or 非农业 *feinongye*). Under Mao, the system strictly controlled population movements and access to welfare. Although *hukou* no longer restricts physical movement as it did in the past, it constrains other forms of mobility. For instance, urban *hukou*-holders continue to enjoy access to high-quality urban services such as subsidized housing, healthcare, public education and other benefits which are denied to their rural peers. Because of its impact in so many aspects of life, *hukou* status is a key determinate in the fate of nearly every Chinese citizen (Chan 2009).

The urban *hukou* functions like any title of nobility as described by Bourdieu, and even migrants themselves acquiesce to the terms of symbolic power which the state guarantees for registered urbanites. The preponderance of material and cultural resources which registered urbanites (*hukou*-holders) claim at the expense of rural migrants fosters more than disdain and inferiority; the logic of inequality maps onto subjectivities to disempower the underclasses. The following passage, taken from a study of basement-renting[7] migrants in Beijing and the homeowners who live above them, is characteristic of rural-urban relations found throughout the literature:

> The contrast between basement tenants and homeowners is so stark that migrants often internalize the stigma on themselves. Living in small, dark rooms in basements, many basement tenants have a strong sense of inferiority. Virtually all the basement

> tenants we interviewed realized that they are categorically different from homeowners above the ground... this internalization prevents them from interacting with homeowners with confidence and dignity. For example, when homeowners complain about basement tenants using the public space above the ground to air out their comforters and dry clothes, most basement tenants will either stop doing it, or do it secretly when no homeowners are around... even basement tenants themselves believe that they should not use the public space above the ground, and they try their best to avoid direct conflicts with homeowners. (Huang & Yi 2015: 2964).

As the passage above also indicates, physical urban spaces are valued not just for the advantages which their location affords – their spatial capital, their location relative to workplaces and amenities, etc – they are further ranked and demarcated by the properties of their intended inhabitants. Moreover, individual agents seem to have an innate, consistent understanding of who "belongs" in certain spaces and who does not. This has become particularly pronounced in reform-era China, where the re-commodification of housing opens a new horizon for the articulation of distinction, aspiration and class (Pow & Kong 2013). Up-market residential communities are marketed and consumed as sites for "lifestyles," where "community, *suzhi*, and harmony, together with unspecified 'traditional Chinese values'," [8] become marks of distinction associated with certain socio-economic groups (Tomba 2009: 607). In such discourse, "the intrinsic quality of civilized middle-class bodies is portrayed as a contagious force, to the point that... they create value by reinventing physical and social spaces, often for the simple reason of inhabiting them" (Tomba 2009: 608). Conversely, locations where poverty-marked, rural bodies concentrate – such as quasi-segregated "shanty towns" or urban villages (城中村, *chengzhongcun*) – are characterized in media, policy and public imagination as places which are dirty, chaotic, unsafe and in need of management (Zhang 2002, Huang & Yi 2015). Affluent middle-class neighborhoods are allowed limited autonomy as their residents are considered "responsible" enough to manage their own affairs (particularly those related to economic wellbeing), while declining, working-class neighborhoods are subject to more active intervention as their residents are considered incapable of pursuing their own interests (Tomba 2014, chapters 3 and 5).

Contrary to whatever self-congratulatory sense of earned merit China's middle-classes might experience, Tomba (2014, especially chapter 3) demonstrates that the state deliberately cultivated a consumer-oriented, professional middle class with close ties to the government and public employment (a class "in the system," 体制内). This group had a further advantage in acquiring quality housing – plus the status and wealth of urban property ownership – thanks to previous advantaged positions in the state economy (Tomba 2014: 100-10). We find in middle-class spaces, and middle-class bodies, the criterion of *suzhi* by which others are judged and evaluated. The symbolic capital associated with these sites derives from a history of inherited privilege and social engineering. This history persists to make China's evolving and developing cities into spaces of increasing spatial inequality centered on consumption, self-discipline and the self-conscious pursuit of modern development.

Even when migrants and urbanites occupy similar positions in physical space, they are delimited in social space by symbolic barriers. Generally speaking, the migrant is unable to exist in the city on equal terms with the registered urbanite because of "the indelible marks of rurality on her body and her inability to occupy the spaces of urban consumption" (Anagnost 2008: 513). As with other forms of symbolic discrimination, money and goods are only part of the story. We can take one well-known "urban village," Zhejiangcun (浙江村) in Beijing, as a prime example: in the 1990s, migrants from Wenzhou – an archetypal low-*suzhi* population known for its merchants – turned the area into a prosperous hub of garment production, only to find themselves

repeatedly targeted for eviction and resettlement by local authorities (Xiang 2005: 1-4, 144-165). One explanation for this eviction is that the Wenzhou "villagers" and their labor-intensive trade lacked the "right" marks of cultivation and refinement. The mapping of social space onto physical space was a phenomenon observed by Bourdieu in his research on the Berbers of Algeria (Jenkins 1992: 18-19). Later, he wrote: "there is no space, in a hierarchical society, that is not hierarchized and which does not express social hierarchies and distances in a more or less distorted or euphemized fashion" (Bourdieu 2018: 107). This is also the case in China, where configurations of symbolic inequality inform which types of individuals can occupy which types of physical spaces.

This brings us to our second major Mao-era institution which continues to inform contemporary inequality: the *danwei* system. During the socialist era, housing and other welfare benefits for urban *hukou*-holders employed in the state-sector were provided by the *danwei*. Urban residents outside of the state-sector received housing from municipal housing authorities (Liu & Wu 2005). *Danwei* were also the basic units of urban organization under Mao. Many functioned as independent, self-contained communities where residents had easy access to housing, employment, schools and hospitals. The quality of housing, welfare and amenities depended on each *danwei*'s position in the hierarchy of the state sector, where certain industries and enterprises were considered more valuable than others according to state planning objectives.

Also relevant to the urban livelihood hierarchy was each individual's classification as either a worker or a cadre (along with their rank in each category), while those outside of the state economy in the "collective sector" (mostly small businesses started before 1949) were the most disadvantaged (Wang 2004: 22-6). In many cases, *danwei* jobs were passed down from parents to children (Zhang 2015, Li et al 2018). Class labels which defined people's political background (as either a revolutionary cadre, poor peasant, worker, landlord, capitalist, and so on) were another means for stratifying society and access to benefits; these were also inherited through male descent lines (Yan 2010: 491). Elites in the state economy included revolutionary elites who took part in the Communist revolution, as well as elites from the earlier guild system which predated the PRC[9] (Perry 1997). Local origins were important too, as early Chinese industrialization depended on occupationally specialist migrants who brought their trades to cities (Eyferth 2009: 221). After the revolution, earlier sources of identity (local associations, guilds, religious organizations) were suppressed while new political and social identities ascribed by the State were gradually seen as natural and necessary (Eyferth 2009: 223). Although the value of certain traits and capital forms may have changed over time, the point here is that historical trajectories were relevant to social positions in China's transition to socialism just as they influence positions in the reform era.

During the 1990s, when China's neoliberal turn led to massive state-sector layoffs, many poorly performing SOEs were privatized, restructured or shut down. This led to a major decline in welfare benefits and standards-of-living for workers attached to weak or failed *danwei* (Chen 2012). Millions of older state-sector employees became structurally unemployed. They, along with rural migrant workers, would eventually comprise one of urban China's largest poverty groups[10] (Liu et al 2008). These included many so-called "4050 staff" (4050 人员, *renyuan*): that is, women over 40 years old and men over 50 years old (Wang 2004: 56). Interestingly, this cohort included many from the "sent down" generation[11] of the Cultural Revolution, as well as the generation socialized during the Mao era. In many cases, these older employees were weakly incorporated into the state sector and so became disadvantaged during the transition to a market economy (He et al 2008, Liu et al 2018). On the symbolic level, the skills, traits and "passive" dispositions they acquired under socialism are precisely those which are devalued today. This was made explicit in media which lamented the low "cultural level and business skills" of China's laid-off workers

as the country prepared its enterprise sector for international competition[12] (Solinger 2013: 75). These older workers, along with rural migrants without *suzhi*, become “inferior citizens, flawed subjects” (Zhang 2017: 14); and their marginalization continues via redevelopment which, among other outcomes, widens the domain of middle- and upper-class lifestyles.

The elevation of urban, middle-class sensibilities is further encouraged by the government through performance, marketing and media rhetoric. Public campaigns in Shanghai and other cities encourage the “civilization” (文明, *wenming*) of urban citizens through instructions on behaviors including how to dress, how to drive, how to use public toilets, and how to address others (Tomba 2009). Public banners and signs also encourage a range of “civilized behaviors” and every year the city’s residential communities compete for the official title of “civilized residential quarter” (文明小区, *wenming xiaoqu*) (Pow 2007: 1547). One implication of such campaigns is that urbanites are initiated into a code of conduct which will elevate their *suzhi* and distinguish them from outsiders, namely, stigmatized peasants and other poverty groups. Along the way, they also learn how to stimulate GDP growth through appropriate consumption, while not challenging the status quo (Tomba 2009). International events are also part of the Chinese government’s civilizing mission. The 2010 Shanghai World Expo, for example, intended to make urban citizens “presentable” and “respectable” on the global stage, while also replacing problematized communities near the Expo site with “the desired social group who are younger, better educated or foreigners” (Zhang 2017: 14).

Building, and Rebuilding, The Social World

It is important to mention that the social world which Bourdieu describes is also a physical world of matter, bodies and concrete spaces. It is an imminent world, endowed with the objective properties which subjective agents invest it with. Cities, neighborhoods, infrastructure and homes have the same potential to classify, and be classified, as all other products of human creation. Bourdieu observed that building forms and housing practices helped condition, and were conditioned by, representative clusters of behavior during his early work in Algeria. Spaces demand certain lifestyles of their inhabitants, and the shift into “modern” atomized apartment living, for example, demanded ways of thinking and acting which subsumed some earlier traditional practices (Bourdieu 1977: 85-6). One could make similar observations about contemporary China, where the production of new physical spaces redefines the boundaries of social space. This becomes evident when one considers, for example, the symbolic capital which concentrates in “modern” spaces such as gated, luxury communities and other “high-end” enclaves (see Pow 2007, Pow & Kong 2013). But for the production of a “high-end” there must also be a production of a “low-end.”

To better understand current social classifications of urban space, we must understand what came before. According to the ideals of socialist urban planning, cities were designed with certain normative and ideological goals in mind, namely: correcting the ills of capitalism, reducing alienation among urbanites and developing strong communities (Xie & Costa 1993: 105). Dominant post-1949 interpretations of socialism also meant that housing and related infrastructure were underinvested by planners, who considered them “nonproductive” sectors and thus a secondary priority relative to “productive” sectors such as manufacturing (Zhu 2000). In the 1950s, for instance, the goal of redeveloping Beijing was to create a “producer city” through increased investment in industry, while also cultivating a working-class population which could displace the city’s “feudal consumers” (Yu 2017: 11-12). The central government’s policy towards cities was

one of "industrialization without urbanization" (Xue 2013: 24). As a consequence, almost all Chinese cities experienced housing shortages (Zhu 2000). Urban growth was mainly absorbed by subdividing existing residential spaces, since urban expansion into the suburbs was also restricted (Wu 2004: 456). Housing space per-capita stagnated at just three meters during the first 30 years of Party rule, and most homes lacked private kitchens and bathrooms (Wang 2004: 2).

With the *danwei* providing employment, housing and services, these sites were central to socialization, identity formation and political control. Close living quarters and intense interpersonal contact also allowed for greater levels of surveillance and indoctrination. During the Mao era, nearly every aspect of personal life was politicized and oriented to serve the collective needs of the state[13]. This process largely played out within the confines of *danwei* communities. But it was also in the *danwei* that older generations of Chinese developed important social capital and family-like connections, as well as place- and employment-based identities (Li et al 2018). *Danwei* identification became essential to social standing and social agency, as well as a critical source of "face" during the socialist era. Without a *danwei*, one would be considered a "suspicious character" or a "dangerous person," as well as a non-entity in urban society (Bray 2005: 3). From a Bourdieusian perspective, we can speculate that different *danwei* environments and the politically charged atmosphere under Mao provided (at least partially) the material and symbolic basis for the habitus of many Chinese who came of age during this period.

The reform era disrupted nearly every aspect of socio-economic life as it existed under Mao. This era of state-directed liberalism would witness the end of guaranteed employment, housing and benefits from the *danwei* system. Starting in the early 1990s, China's central government organized large-scale sales of public and *danwei* housing, at extremely low prices to their occupants. By 1998, the government imposed a policy which stopped public sector employers from directly allocating housing to employees, effectively making housing a matter for the market exclusively; by 2002, about 95 percent of new homes were sold directly to individual buyers (Wang 2004: 73). In 2003, housing welfare provisions had been completely phased out (Ho 2013a). This process coincided with retrenchment across state industry, the emergence of more "flexible" labour regimes and the rebalancing of urban centers toward the tertiary (service) sector (He & Wu 2005). Many older industrial-sector workers attached to failed *danwei* were laid off and become part of a new category of people: the urban poor. In essence, everyone was left to "sink or swim" in China's new employment and housing markets.

Amidst the upheavals of reform, the introduction of markets brought new opportunities for consumption and individual expression which did not exist in the Mao era. This meant new opportunities for distinction, as well as new possibilities for self-creation based on new class divisions. Yan (2010: 504-5) describes the development of an "enterprising self," a "desiring self," and a "market-driven self" within Chinese individuals, all of whom are encouraged by structural shifts orchestrated by the state. The properties of these new "selves" become entangled in concerns of *suzhi*, which provides a symbolic logic for social ordering. With the logic of *suzhi* taking hold on the level of subjectivity, its accumulation and manifestation would eventually mark China's increasingly segregated cities as they underwent redevelopment.

By the reform era, socialist urban planning models no longer made sense within China's neoliberal dispensation. Cities became self-conscious totems of modernity, consumption and economic development facilitated by integration with foreign capital markets (Harvey 2008). Under new central directives, local cadres were also evaluated based on criteria related to urbanism. The redevelopment of many older neighborhoods was also intended to suit the country's new social

and economic priorities. The following description of Kunming in the late 1990s and early 2000s is (still) applicable to most cities in China in the decades after reform:

> Justified in the name of modernizing the city and accommodating commercial growth... old residential communities were replaced by large banks, hotels, department stores, and commercial plazas. Many long-term residents told me that even they could not find their way around now. The state-controlled media and officials' speeches celebrated the restructuring as a giant step forward toward city modernization... the obsession with being *xiandai* (modern) was clearly manifested in such phrases as "becoming a major modern metropolis," "to build a modernized city" or "developing Kunming into an internationally recognized modern metropolis." To be sure, the city and provincial governments were not the only ones that expressed such enthusiasm. Young people and the rising new middle class also embraced this vision of spatial modernization and were proud of the new cityscape. (Zhang 2010, 49)

As spaces developed and became self-consciously "modern," so too did they call for "modern" subjects who could occupy them. Human beings had to be judged according to attributions of modernity, backwardness or "success" in the new economy. It is against this backdrop that the discourse of *suzhi* emerged to evaluate spaces and their inhabitants. It is not mere speculation to say that concerns about *suzhi* and status have become major preoccupation among China's emerging middle-classes, and these concerns are made legible in the built environment, as well as individuals homes.

Of course, it was also during the reform era that the poor physical condition of China's many dilapidated urban neighborhoods became undeniable, as well as a source of embarrassment for a country with aspirations of joining global modernity (Zhang 2010: ch.3). In the early 1990s, urban renewal became a goal of many cities, including Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou (Wu 2016). Redevelopment was supported by the emergence of a nascent private property market, itself a product of the reform era (Wang 2000). This market covered only use rights while urban land itself remained (nominally) under state control (rural residents can lease their land temporarily under certain circumstances, but generally remain "tied" to it by their *hukou*). Not only did this create new wealth and revenue streams for developers and local authorities, but redevelopment also served political and image-making urbanization imperatives as well (He & Wu 2005: 10-11). While the need to address decades of neglect should not be downplayed, redevelopment also provided a means for the social reconstitution of spaces and the physical manifestation of new priorities.

Among early notable residential redevelopment schemes, in 1992 Shanghai authorities launched Urban Renewal Project 365 (上海365 危棚简屋), which aimed to renovate 3.65 million square-meters of dangerous, shanty-type housing by the end of that decade, with effected households receiving 10 square-meters of housing per person (Yang & Chang 2006). In 1995, construction of a north-south elevated road also relocated some 18,000 households; while another 13,000 households were also relocated that year under a "housing congestion alleviation" program (Wu 2004a). The redevelopment of inner-city areas coincided with the redistribution of populations from centers toward the periphery through voluntary and involuntary relocation[14] (He 2009). Similar experiences played out elsewhere in China as property-led development and government reliance on land revenue fueled rapid urbanization and gentrification. An emerging emphasis on growth-oriented urban development favored by the private sector, the rescaling of state power, and wealth accumulation in cities are all features of China's shift to neoliberal urbanism (He & Wu 2009). This would have dramatic consequences (including extreme cases of social violence) as

Figure 1: **The Zhangyuan (张园) neighborhood of Shanghai, photographed on 9 April 2019 after being closed off to non-residents ahead of redevelopment. The banner on top of the neighborhood's entrance gate reads: 乔迁大喜, or "moving to a better place is a great joy." The term qiaoqian (乔迁) carries a rosier connotation than the more stigmatized term chaiqian (拆迁, see below). Photo: author.**

policy changes during the 1990s privileged the financial interests of developers over social equality or the needs of residents[15] (He & Wu 2009: 292).

It was also in the early 1990s that poverty neighborhoods began to form around the sites of failed or declining *danwei*. These areas were, and are, inhabited by laid-off workers who failed to find stable and well-paying employment within the new market-based economy. Studies have found that it was predominantly ex-managers in state industries who managed to seize the most lucrative opportunities of privatization, while many lower ranking staff encountered a much harsher reality (Yan 2010: 499; Hurst 2009: 86-107). A certain number of private entrepreneurs who accumulated wealth outside of the state system also exist, but this class is viewed as inferior due to its lack of cultural capital and unrefined consumption habits (Zhang 2010: 131; Zhang 2018). Eventually, many better-off, and better-connected, individuals in central urban neighborhoods would move away and be replaced by rural-to-urban migrants (Cheng 2010). Specifically, cadres and managers were more likely to become early active movers into commodity housing (Wu 2004). An emerging middle- and upper-class also found itself able to afford, with support and encouragement from the government, up-scale commodity housing (see Tomba 2009, 2014). In Shanghai, for example, 1.6 million square meters of private villas and up-scale apartments were

sold in 1995; this would increase to 21.7 million square-meters in 2003 (Pow 2007: 1543). Many of the newly-prosperous purchased commodity housing but retained their original homes and rented them to the less well-off. Even today, the urban poor who "failed" in the market-based economy continue to occupy these "residualized" neighborhoods long after their more successful neighbors moved away (Liu Wu 2005; Liu, He & Wu 2008).

With the expansion of urban centers, another new phenomenon of the reform era, urban villages (such as Zhejiangcun mentioned earlier), became simultaneously poverty neighborhoods and migrant enclaves due to the availability of affordable housing and the informality of regulations in such locations (Liu & Wu 2005). They attracted many people on the fringes of urban society, including poor students, white-collar workers with low salaries, under-employed university graduates[16], taxi drivers and small-scale entrepreneurs (Ren 2013: 123). These spaces would become stigmatized as places of crime, immorality, uncleanliness and backwardness (Li et al 2006, Pan 2011, Wu 2009). In their own way, they were also part of a society-wide process of spatializing class, just like newly emergent gated communities for the middle- and upper-classes. With time, many of these villages, as well as the residualized communities mentioned above, would become targets of demolition, resettlement and redevelopment (Wu 2004). Many, but certainly not all, of these redevelopment programs would displace their original inhabitants to distant locations in the suburbs, thus making way for new subjects and lifestyles in city centers.

More Than Bricks and Mortar: Producing Social Spaces

This brings me back to a point I have already mentioned: that *suzhi* and the socially valued traits it represents concentrate in certain spaces, and certain individuals, and not in others. To prove this, we must understand how spaces possess more value, and more symbolic meaning, than just the sum of their material parts. We can observe this in the lifestyles and behaviors which occur in particular spaces. We can also observe what these spaces represent in the popular imagination and in the planner's gaze.

The status and prestige endowed in newly-built urban spaces are readily apparent in the language which is used to market them. In many cases, up-scale and middle-class homes are explicitly sold as emblems of status and tickets to Western-style modernity. These often contain not-so-subtle repudiations of socialism's ideological tenants. As a typical example, Pow and Kong (2013) describe promotional materials for one development in Shanghai:

> The advertisement of Summer Villa... compares homeowners to modern-day royalty (*shidai wangzhe*) in the marketing slogan "The King Returns" (*wangzhe gui lai*). Like a monarch who has returned to her/his palace, the advertisement stokes the ego of the potential homeowner who is cast into an enchanting world of regal fantasy where s/he can "live like a king" by simply moving into Summer Villa. In other advertisements, homeowners are referred to as "celebrities" (*mingliu*); "successful people" (*chengong renshi*), or "bourgeois nobility" (*daguan guiren*). Remarkably, what were formerly considered as "class enemies" (e.g. capitalists, bourgeoisie) during the Maoist period have now become the new valorized role models in the country, supplanting the long held position of "model workers" (*laomuo*) who were praised in the past for their selflessness in serving the Party and state. (141)

Rather than dismissing this grandiose language as mere marketing hyperbole, we must read it within the context of an increasingly individualized, market-oriented society where homeownership

is a critical marker of distinction in the Bourdieusian sense. Zhang (2010) finds that real estate developers not only manufacture homes: their advertising materials become a "primary source" for the social imagination to construct an ideal middle-class and how it should live[17] (128). These materials appear to promise entry into this class, complete with its associated dispositions, all with a single home purchase (ibid). This appeal to class status is paralleled by an official discourse which favors middle-classes, living in new housing compounds, as "exemplars of a self-responsible, well-behaved, and 'high-*suzhi*' citizenry that embodies the values of the civilizing project China embarked on" (Tomba 2014: 25). This project, centers on the creation of a valorized, disciplined, "responsible" middle-class which can pursue economic development and ensure social stability. Of course, this class has to reside, and make its presence known, somewhere. It must somehow distinguish itself in the subjective world as well as the objective world. Housing compounds become sites for locating and defining this class, and advertising materials appeal to such tendencies. If we believe Bourdieu's (2005) observation that "advertising is so effective only because it panders to pre-existing dispositions in order to better exploit them," (23) then we may surmise that the inflated language which surrounds middle-class residences is how members of this class classify themselves and the spaces they inhabit.

Distinction is also embedded within the forms of many newly-built structures in order to contain, and reproduce, the *suzhi* of occupants. This manifests in a preoccupation with walls, gates, security measures, exclusivity and restricted access meant to fortify "civilized enclaves" against "uncultured" and "dangerous" masses of outsiders[18] (Pow 2007). Even in communities for the less well-to-do, concerns about security and outsiders also exist in the form of locked gates and barred windows (Zhang 2010: 117). Such measures represent one of the more mundane, and unchallenged, ways that spaces become divided and segregated, all for apparently rational and sensible reasons. This fortification carries strong class connotations, with migrants, the poor and other low *suzhi* groups typically cast as the shunned "other"[19] (Pow 2007, Tomba 2014). Along with supposed concerns about safety, various restrictive technologies are also meant to foster a sense of "exclusivity" and the "security" of social homogeneity behind walls and gates (Pow & Kong 2013: 141). Interestingly, in many older, poorer neighborhoods which have been (or are in the process of being) demolished and rebuilt, access is relatively unrestricted and homes open directly onto public streets. Indeed, in one older downtown neighborhood in Shanghai (Zhangyuan, 张园) which I visited in April 2019, it was only after redevelopment started that access became tightly controlled (see figure 1). If exclusivity is a sign of distinction, many spaces inhabited by marginal and the downwardly mobile urban populations would lack it.

Along with exclusivity, privacy is also built into the new world of commodity housing. This happens through the alienation of neighbors in atomized apartments, as well as increasing spatial separation between workplace and home. Neither of these situations were possible in older *danwei* communities. Today, many residents experience the privacy of modern apartment living as "freedom" when remembered against intense cohabitating relations under Mao (Fleischer 2007, Pow 2007). Stated directly, Zhang (2010: 122) writes: "Middle-class home buyers are obsessed with privacy because they see the possession of private space as a form of liberation from the old, socialist way of life... owning one's own home, spatially and socially detached from the *danwei*, is taken by many as an ultimate liberation because it enables one to break away from various social constraints and surveillance." Of course, new residential complexes often lack a sense of community, as neighbors share spatial proximity but have little in common (Liu 2009: 191-3). In a description of lifestyle differences between *danwei* communities and new commodity housing estates, one of Zhang's (2010) informants says:

> We used to live on a *danwei* compound and knew almost everyone. We paid visits to neighbors and friends in our spare time. But since I moved into this new community, things have changed. I have not been to any neighbor's home so far. They would not invite you. At best they say hello to you when running into you outside or playing with kids at the playground. I would not feel comfortable going to their home or chatting as we really have little in common. After all, we are strangers to one another. (121)

This fixation on privacy goes hand-in-hand with a larger process of "individualization" encouraged by the marketization and privatization of the economy (see Yan 2010). Under conditions of neoliberalism, subjects must succeed or fail in the market "on their own;" which militates against the formation of shared identities based on comradeship in the workplace. This atomization of the self has extended from the workplace to residential spaces[20]. Bourdieu noticed something similar in postwar France, where the creation of single-family homes also led to alienation among members of the middle class (Bourdieu 2005: 189). In the Chinese context, the general trend toward individualization has coincided with an emerging discourse on rights, particularly rights to property, as opposed to needs or entitlements. This opposition is also one which characterizes the relationship between the socialist past and the market-oriented present.

Private markets offer a vast new arena of personal choices and opportunities for distinction through consumption. Consumption practices also have a direct relationship with *suzhi* and certain kinds of consumption are socially demanded in certain environments due to their association with certain types of subjects (see Zhang 2018). In residential communities built for particular class groups, "proper" consumption becomes a way of validating status and gaining respect from neighbors (Zhang 2010: 122-3; see also Osburg 2013). The consumption of certain types of housing spaces – for instance, housing spaces promising exclusivity, privacy, anonymity and modernity[21] – can itself serve as a marker of class status. But consumption can also contribute to the construction of lifestyles which become coherent within the "container" of physical space (Fleischer 2007). Take, for instance, another of Zhang's (2010) informants, the wife of a successful entrepreneur:

> A few years ago, we already had saved enough money to buy a unit in another upscale community, but we eventually decided on a lower-end community. Why? *Because even though we could afford the housing itself, we could not afford living there at that time.* For example, while most families drive their private cars, I would be embarrassed if I had to ride my bike to work every day. Even taking a taxi is looked down upon there. If our neighbors see my parents coming to visit me by bus, they will be laughed at too. Since my rich neighbors go to shop for shark fins and other expensive seafood every day, I cannot let them see me buying cabbage and turnips... If you do not have that kind of consuming power, *you'd better not live there because you will not fit in well.* (123, emphasis added)

As seen above, consumption and lifestyle choices contribute to the formation of social and spatial boundaries. According to Bourdieu, such social boundaries are built upon distinctions in supposedly subjective "taste," yet what perhaps makes the Chinese context unique is that divisions and segregating mechanisms are so explicit and consciously acknowledged.

Large-scale gentrification projects are a means by which planners and developers establish the terms and aesthetics of favored urban lifestyles. Take, for instance, one of China's most iconic gentrification projects: Xintiandi. Built in collaboration between local authorities and

developers[22], this luxury shopping, dining and residential redevelopment project in downtown Shanghai has displaced thousands of households (He & Wu 2005: 13-4) and captures some of the more glaring contradictions of urban redevelopment in China. Xintiandi is supposedly a re-creation of a traditional Shanghai neighborhood, but its original residents were all driven out; it's meant to be a "living area," but sustains almost no life outside of commercial activity (Qin 2013: 139-40). In a further irony, Xintiandi is intended to invoke the "glory days" of "Old Shanghai" – the period between Shanghai's opening as a treaty port in the 1840s up to its "liberation" in the 1940s – even though a centerpiece of the area is the first Chinese Communist Party Congress Hall (He & Wu 2005: 8-10). Under Mao, the entrepreneurial, Western-leaning culture associated with pre-revolutionary Shanghai became negatively associated with capitalism, imperialism and colonialism (Qian 2016). At the point of destruction and redevelopment, old homes become real estate capital and the lifestyles they sustained fade into nostalgia (Li 2015: ch.4). Leaving aside the hagiographic reference to Party history, Xintiandi celebrates globalized elite consumption while offering up a glorious past sanitized of the poverty and isolation of socialism. Xintiandi has been put forward by planners and builders as a successful "flagship" project of large-scale redevelopment and image-making, an example for others to follow (He & Wu 2005, He 2009, Qin 2013: ch.2). According to the central argument of this thesis, the symbolism of Xintiandi is not accidental or insignificant; rather it is reflective of a system of values that elevates certain lifestyles and diminishes others.

The Stigma of Demolition, The Pain of Relocation

The section above is meant to suggest how certain spaces are created for China's middle- and upper-classes. But what about spaces for those who "don't measure up"? I'm speaking of migrants, laid-off workers, the poor and others on the fringes of urban society. As we have seen, redevelopment has a tendency to displace those who "don't belong" based on their lack of valued traits. Any discussion of redevelopment as a site of social inequality must also acknowledge its more stigmatizing, punitive and contentious aspects.

In China and elsewhere, force, coercion or deception are often – but not always – exercised by powerful stakeholders such as government authorities, property developers and demolition companies. Violent evictions were relatively common during the 1990s and early 2000s and they continue to occur, although violent appropriations have given way to more legalistic, bureaucratized and rationalized methods of displacement (Chu 2014, Zhang 2017). Developers and city governments often out-source the physical demolition of old structures and relocation of households to contractors or subordinate agencies who are motivated to maximize their own profits either through "low-ball" compensation offers for relocated families, deliberate misinterpretation of legal compensation standards, or through intimidation, harassment or violence (see Deng 2017). While households with legitimate claims (e.g. legal ownership rights and urban *hukou* status) to expropriated housing are usually entitled to compensation – either in cash, in kind, or benefits such as promises of job creation in new living sites – whether, and to what extent, such compensation actually materializes is another matter. Legal loopholes, selective policy interpretations and the conflicting interests of demolition actors constrain what many relocatees ultimately receive in compensation (Ho 2013a).

Whether, and to what extent, pressure to relocate can be interpreted as coercion remains another open question, especially when households are nominally free to reject and challenge resettlement proposals from redevelopers[23]. Within the same urban neighborhood slated for

demolition, some households may move willingly when given the chance, while others must be compelled to do so. For some, government relocation is a “once-in-a-lifetime” chance to improve living conditions (Qin 2010); others may experience the loss of a familiar environment and livelihood as a major trauma. It is often the case too that Chinese officials and developers will promise greater benefits to relocatees who cooperate early, and fewer benefits to those who delay or refuse to leave (Deng 2017, Li et al 2016, Li 2015). Some scholars distinguish between “passive” and “active” movers depending on whether the decision to relocate is initiated within the household or in response to outside pressures (Wu 2004, Chen 2012).

Figure 2: **Shanghai #44 Dong Fangbang Lu, 2006. The remnants of a dilapidated building stand amidst a neighborhood consigned to demolition. Photo: Greg Girard, used with permission.**

In the past, recalcitrant homeowners were known to be beaten, kidnapped, detained and even killed by developers, while others committed suicide in protest or in grief after being evicted from their homes (Li 2015, Qin 2013). For this reason, the term domicide, first coined by Porteous and Smith (2001), has been used to describe the suffering which some evictees experience in the loss of traditional homes (Qin 2010, Qin 2013, Zhang 2015, Zhang 2017, Li 2018). Involuntary moves today do not always involve forced eviction or heavy-handed clearance. Chu (2014), for example, speaks of more passive-aggressive, legalistic tactics that diffuse the pressure to relocate, while reasons for moving could include compensated relocation for urban development, reallocation of housing benefits, or the purchase of commodity housing (Chen 2012, Wu 2004). Deng (2017) also finds cases where neighbors are enlisted to pressure each other in the furtherance of redevelopment projects. From a Bourdieusian perspective, critics say that fixation on the subjective experiences of relocatees (even “happy” and “willing” movers) distracts from larger dynamics of structural injustice which are misrecognized and reproduced by displacement (Zhang 2017). Indeed, demolition, redevelopment and relocation are inherently problematizing as they suggest “better” ways to use spaces, often for “better” subjects. Heavy-handed displacement tactics, denials of procedural justice and inadequate compensation also have their own way of instilling shame and stigma, as such tactics suggest that those who experience them are not entitled to better treatment.
In the popular imagination, the term which best captures the material and social dimensions of urban development-as-lived-experience is: *chaiqian* (拆迁), meaning “demolish and evict” or “de-

molish and resettle." As the terms suggests, during the process of urban redevelopment, residents are typically removed from their old homes and these structures are then razed to make way for new construction. For *chaiqianhu* (拆迁户, evicted households, or individual evictees) this can mean the loss of social rights to livelihood and familiar life-worlds made possible by urban residency (Hsing 2010: 62). Even the character *chai* (拆, demolition) itself is said to constitute an "awful mark" of symbolic violence; of Party-state power and global capitalist desire converging to remake the social landscape (Chua 2008). The feeling of depravation which many associate with *chaiqian* has inspired the neologism *chaina* (拆拿), a near-homophone of "China" which means "to knock down and take" (Chu 2014: 354).

At the community level, practices of *chaiqian* create ghostly landscapes of urban ruin. These spaces represent a powerful manifestation of "failure, disinvestment, and abandonment" (Lam 2019: 80). Such landscapes have been powerfully captured by artists such as Greg Girard (in the photobook *Phantom Shanghai* [2007]), Wang Jinsong (whose piece *One Hundred Signs of Demolition* features 100 images of the character *chai*) and Yin Xiuzhen (who used roof tiles from demolished buildings in several large-scale works, such as *Ruined City, Sunning the Tiles* and *Transformation*), among many others. What such works convey is a sense of powerlessness amid destructive transformation, rather than nostalgia (Ren 2014: 8). During my own visits to Laoximen, a historic "old town" area of Shanghai which is currently in the final stages of demolition, I came across several amateur photographers and hobby artists who were documenting the area's gradual demolition for historical purposes. Many of these individuals acknowledged the area's dilapidated condition and the need for upgrading, but their desire to document the area for "future generations" suggested skepticism for what the area would become after it was *chaidaole* (拆到了, completely removed). Such concerns mirror what scholars have observed about the central role of home and community in social reproduction (Zhang 2017), and signal a popular awareness that urbanization is altering existing social fabrics.

Finally, for migrants, the structurally unemployed, the urban poor and others on the "losing end" of redevelopment, the results can be declassation, social exclusion, increased economic hardship, the loss of vital resources, compromised identity, or all of the above. Not only do such residents lack the resources – financial and otherwise – to acquire improved housing, either through the market or assistance policies, they also lack the symbolic capital and distinction which middle- and upper-classes use to justify urban belonging (see Zhang 2002). The subjective experiences of displacees deserve concern and attention, yet here I can provide two cases which would seem to corroborate the theoretical aims of this articles.

For the most marginal agents displaced by redevelopment, the few resources they possess, in lieu of other valued assets, are time and their own bodies. Even these may be subject to loss, sacrifice or dispossession. On the plight of one informant in Shanghai, named Xiaoli, Zhang (2015: 145) writes: "After the water and electricity had been cut off and the destruction of the [surrounding] buildings had started, [she] cooked food on a small pot over a small fire lit among the ruins. 'I was back in a primitive society. But, what else could I do?'" According to Xiaoli, thugs and security guards hired to intimidate her and others even unleashed a wolf into the courtyard of her residence (ibid). Ho (2013) also quotes an informant in Chongqing, Mr Gu, who planned to detonate his house with a homemade bomb in case of forced eviction: "Black powder is easy to make: just mix potassium nitrate, sulfur, and charcoal powder. I'd exchange my own life for at least two of theirs... The only way to counter the government's barbarism is with primitive violence" (150). They are not alone: many protestors and nail-householders say they are ready to sacrifice their lives to protect their homes (Shepard 2015, ch.2). In many tragic cases, such threats

have been realized with deadly consequences. Again, this suggests a lack of other resources to pursue struggles for belonging.

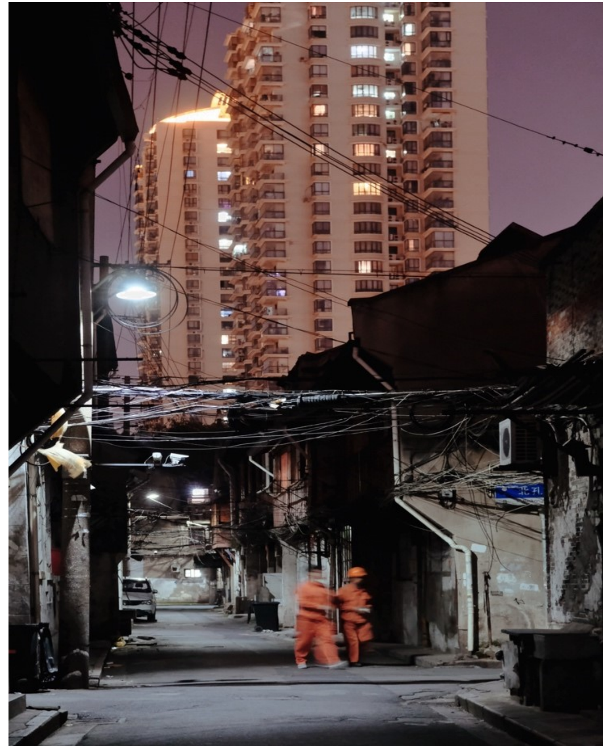

Figure 3: **The Laoximen (老西门) area of Shanghai, photographed in April 2019. Here two demolition workers walk through the mostly vacated neighborhood. Note the contrast between the older, traditional lane houses in the foreground and the modern apartment tower in the background. Laoximen is one of the oldest continually inhabited areas of Shanghai. Photo: author.**

Xiaoli and Mr Gu emerge as two of the most disadvantaged urbanites from the ethnographic literature on demolition and development. Xiaoli is a rare squatting protestor and her unusual residency status – she is a second-generation migrant who married a Shanghainese man with a "collective" (集体 *jiti*) *hukou* registered at his place of employment – made her family homeless after their eviction from her husband's dormitory, largely due to a complicated bureaucratic history which dates to the socialist era[24] (Zhang 2015: 144). Significantly, Xiaoli's eviction came with redevelopment for the 2010 World Expo. Meanwhile, the story of Mr Gu, in his mid-60s, has a drifting, aimless quality to it. After holding a few temporary jobs in the 1980s (suggestive of weak incorporation into the State economy), he became a monk as it offered a "stable job" with a place to live following the death of his first wife (Ho 2013: 150). He eventually inherited the home of an aunt, and when this home was slated for demolition to make way for luxury apartments, Mr Gu asked to be compensated with one of these units – a demand which he himself seems to view as ridiculous and futile[25]. His conclusion is probably accurate based on the spatialization of class in China. As an elderly man with limited means, and limited access to sources of distinction, the "high-end" world springing up around him seems made for persons possessed of different

social properties. That individuals such as Xiaoli and Mr Gu are excluded from the fruits of redevelopment is not coincidental; it is consistent with configurations of inequality described earlier. Available information on these informants points to a weak position in society during the socialist era, which prepared them for further declassation in the post-reform era. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this pattern further suggests that marginal and downwardly-mobile subjects may also be socially constrained by the mechanisms of their habitus, which tend to unconsciously reproduce existing social hierarchies and the objective conditions of each subject's place therein.

Conclusion

The argument put forward in this article is that redevelopment opens new opportunities for social and spatial distinction; these are structured by the legacies of *hukou* and *danwei* position, and made sensible through the post-reform-era discourse of *suzhi*. Those with disadvantaged positions relative to these institutions are the most adversely effected by redevelopment. At the same time, development increasingly creates (physical and symbolic) spaces for exemplary subjects as valued by the Chinese state's socio-economic agenda. When the urban poor, laid-off workers or migrants are pushed further toward the fringes, this is not merely because they lack economic capital or marketable skills. Rather, disadvantaged economic positions are likely to be homologous with deprivation of symbolic capital, including the self-disciplining power of *suzhi*, exemplary subjectivities and socially-valued discourse. In this way, redevelopment becomes a means for physically, materially and spatially structuring hierarchical social relations.

As cities attract more capital, more resources and more people, they also become focal points for the study of inequality. Understanding the nature of this inequality will require greater attention to patterns of domination, rather than market mechanisms or even capitalism *per se*. Ultimately, understanding domination in all contexts will require attention to subject-making and histories of constructed identity. As Bourdieu's theoretical corpus informs us, agents experience domination, exclusion and symbolic violence not just because of what they possess, but because of who they are, and what they embody, within the context of a larger, historically contingent social universe.

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Notes

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[2]Bourdieu mentions *amor fati* to describe the "love" which social agents feel towards their fates, without realizing that the social lives they have "chosen" have been forced upon them (Bourdieu 2000: 143, Bourdieu 1984: 173-4).

[3]"Like the acquisition of a muscular physique or a suntan, it cannot be done at second hand" (Bourdieu 1986: 244).

[4]Hu's theory refers to the construction of "two civilizations" (两个文明, *liang ge wenming*); that is, the "material civilization" (物质文明, *wuzhi wenming*) and the "spiritual civilization" (精神文明, *jingshen wenming*). In the early years of the reform era, several sources promoted the theory that modern development meant improving the material world as well as the inner "spiritual" of the individual (see Bakken 2000: 53-66).

[5]A widely-known quote attributed to the architect of Chinese reforms, Deng Xiaoping: "Let some people and some places get rich first. The big principle is common prosperity" (让一部分人、一部分地区先富起来，大原则是共同富裕). (People's Daily, nd).

[6]By contrast, Bourdieu (1977) writes that in societies without formal, impersonal state infrastructure, "relations of domination must be endlessly renewed, because the conditions required for a mediated, lasting appropriation of other agents' labour, services, or homage have not been brought together" (183). More recently, Rehbein (2017) also notes that in the *muang* order of Southeast Asia, class positions were subject to "constant struggles, assaults and even annihilation of ruling families" (60).

[7]For Huang and Yi (2015) this includes a range of inexpensive living quarters meant for low-income migrants, such as underground air defense shelters; converted storage, parking or commercial spaces; or basement facilities found underneath ordinary residential housing communities. According to official estimates, as many as 1 million people live in subterranean dwellings in Beijing alone.

[8]On the classifying power of language: "Even when it is in no way inspired by the conscious concern to stand aloof from working-class laxity, every petit-bourgeois profession of rigour, every eulogy of the clean, sober and neat, contains a tacit reference to uncleanness, in words or things, to intemperance or improvidence" (Bourdieu 1984: 244).

[9]Specifically, Perry's (1997) historical study finds early labor leaders in the Communist movement helped create the country's first State-owned enterprises in the model of exclusivist artisan guilds; these also produced an "aristocracy of labor" which simultaneously shut out large numbers of people from full benefits of employment in the State sector (44-54).

[10]Over 28.1 million workers were laid-off between 1998 and 2003 (Liu et al 2018, citing State Council data).

[11]This refers to the millions of young people who were "sent down" to the countryside (下放青年 *xiafang qingnian* or 知识青年 *zhishi qingnian*) to "learn from" the country's peasants as an alternative to "bourgeoisie" education.

[12]In 1999-2001, Solinger (2013) found media descriptions of laid-off workers as laggards who were victims of their own laziness, backward thinking and inability to adopt "appropriate" market behavior. In interviews from this period, laid-off staff also described themselves as superfluous and expendable; to quote one informant: "For China to progress, we have to go through this process, [even if] people like us will be affected by it... We need to sacrifice for the next generation... so the country can get stronger... eliminating people is a necessary law of social development" (Solinger 2013: 76).

[13]For instance, in Jie Li's (2005) ethnography of a traditional Shanghai lane community, she describes a typical collective wedding in the 1950s where couples were urged to strive for the construction of socialism before marching to a battle hymn for the Korean War (Li 2005: ch.1).

[14]The percentage of Shanghai residents who lived in the city center stood at 49.7 percent in 1982, 42.9 percent in 2000, and 34.9 percent in 2008 (He 2009).

[15]Specifically, He and Wu (2009: 292) find that new regulations introduced in 2001 encouraged property developers to make financial compensation to residents displaced by redevelopment; rather than costlier in-kind, on-site relocation. This disadvantaged low-income residents as financial compensation standards were inadequate to meet rising housing prices.

[16]This group is often referred to as China's "ant tribe" (蚁族, yizu). As the term is, in part, because of their anonymous, colony-like living conditions the dehumanizing comparison to insects is unlikely to be coincidental.

[17]Also: "A private home is not only an important investment but also a salient site for articulating cultural distinction, social entitlement, and life orientation" (Zhang 2010, 79).

[18]Pow (2007) recounts a court case in Shanghai from 2004, where residents sued the developer of their private housing estate for "allowing several commercial shops that are publicly accessible to be set up within the housing premises. Among some of the concerns sited by the residents were the loss of exclusivity and neighborhood security as a result of the developers' decision. As one resident... commented, the newly set-up shops may encourage outsiders of 'inferior quality' (*di suzhi*), especially migrant workers, to enter the housing estate" (1539).

[19]Here I invited comparison with Rehbein (2017): "It is interesting that people in leading positions in any society consider themselves a species apart from the rest of the population. While they claim to have reached their position due to ambition and merit they attribute their success largely to their outstanding abilities. This, of course, reconfirms their self-confidence" (92).

[20]Notably, many laid-off workers who remain in declining neighborhoods report shrinking but strong social networks as a defining feature of their relationship to place (Li 2018: 125).

[21]Here spaces for "modern" living often refer to those which have a "foreign flavor" (洋气, *yangqi*), meaning Western influence, as opposed to traditional Chinese or Soviet-style built forms. (see Zhang 2010: 83)

[22]Consider the following passage from Qin (2013), regarding Vincent Lo, the head of the Hong Kong-based company which developed Xintiandi, and his relationship with local authorities: "In 2006 Vincent Lo 'brushe[d] aside' concerns about Shanghai residents who held out but admitted that 'relocation is a huge hassle,' not because of developers like him, of course, but because of the locals, some of them – 'squatters' his words – who were costing him 'big money.' He complained about the cost of seizing private property but was unfazed because of his faith in the Chinese government: 'if they are important projects, the government will push them through.' Time and again, that is indeed what the Chinese government has done – it judges that importance of any project based on its profit margin instead of human values" (140).

[23]In the 1990s and early 2000s, property developers often hired thugs to carry out violent, forced evictions in neighborhoods slated for demolition and redevelopment. Regulations passed in 2011 ended many such egregious practices, and offered stronger legal protections to individual residents. Yet these regulations still allow for the forced eviction of residents whose homes stand in the way of "public interest projects." For an overview of this regulatory history, see Ren (2014).

[24]In Xiaoli's own words, as recorded by Zhang (2015): "I have been living in Shanghai for almost two decades. I am more Shanghainese than those young Shanghainese... I cannot change my *hukou*. This is the law of our country. This is a strange country. We are all Chinese. *It divides people into different ranks and grades.* We are the second class citizens here" (144, emphasis added).

[25]As described by Ho (2013): "Strangely, he was the only nail householder to mention the idea of a one-to-one replacement in the same place. Even though it sounded reasonable to me, *he was obviously joking as the newly built highrises are much more expensive than his own dwelling*" (150, emphasis added).

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