Moral order in the Post-socialist Chinese city – Generating a dialogue with Robert E. Park's The City

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Abstract

The seminal works by Park and the Chicago school of sociology are of great value for studying a rapidly urbanising China characterised by the decline of the formerly socialist structure and the increasing commodification of services and housing. Their assertion that the industrial organisation of cities has substituted primary and neighbourhood relations with secondary relations characterised by anonymity and utilitarianism also resonates with the rising middle-class population in China. However, our chapter contends that certain population groups have not followed the trajectory of change described by Park but instead continue to rely on primary and local social relations due to interventions of the Chinese state. Our argument is supported by a discussion on the varying social relations in Chinese urban neighbourhoods and specifically on the social life of rural migrants in the urban Chinese society.

1.0 Introduction

China is entering a new stage of slower economic growth and the government's attention is gradually moving towards the social challenges that have built up over the past decades of rapid urbanisation. Millions of rural migrants now live in urban areas and large cities such as Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen continue to attract hundreds of thousands of migrants every year who tend to congregate certain urban neighbourhoods (Chan, 2009; Wang et al., 2016; Yue et al., 2010). Both scholars and the Chinese government are greatly concerned about their integration into the city (Liu et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2016; Yue et al., 2013). Additionally, the early work of Whyte and Parish (1984) found that the social life of urban residents in socialist China consisted mainly of localised social networks. However, since then China's transition to a market economy and rapid rate of urbanisation have allowed residents to create a less territorially bound social network based on family, kin and work ties (Hazelzet and Wissink, 2012). These fundamental changes to the Chinese urban society now call for more understanding of how urbanisation has affected the social life of Chinese urban residents. It is at this point in time that the works of Robert E. Park and the Chicago school seem to be more relevant than ever. One of the key arguments of Park (1915) is that the city should not be merely regarded as a congregation of people but rather as an institution that has its own concept and structure (1915:577). Studying the Chinese city from a human ecological perspective is therefore of great value. Urban China research is not an underdeveloped field and especially empirical studies on the political economic structure have proliferated in the last few decades. However, it is important to stress that the growing number of studies adopting a structural political economy approach should not interpreted as a

critique towards the human ecology approach. Instead, after establishing a general understanding of the political economic structure of China, Park's work should inspire us to rethink about the nature of the city and how to study the city as an institution rather than a collection of people affected by political economic forces. One major concern of the Chicago school was how the moral order of the urban society has been influenced by the peculiar characteristics of the city. Park's (1915) and Wirth's (1938) argument that urbanism, characterised by the industrial organisation of the city and impersonal relations defined by law and money, has replaced the traditional neighbourhood social structure also resonate with the Chinese situation. Social class defined by different types of occupations may also play an important role in changing the moral order of the Chinese city. China's emerging middle class is able to retreat from state control by buying to into gated private estates. Within these estates residents have started to rebuild their own social network and social order, which is primarily based on common interest and the shared social identity of homeowners (Li et al., 2012; Pow, 2007; Yip, 2012).

However, whilst this study acknowledges the continued relevance of Park's research, we also contest his argument that living in the city inevitably leads to the decline of the traditional moral order based on intimate local based social relations (Park 1915:588). For the Chicago school the neighbourhood played an integral role in studying the institution of the city since residents with similar characteristics and preferences concentrate in similar localities. China's urban landscape has also changed considerably due the country's privatisation of housing provision and findings indicate that the social life of residents different considerably depending on the neighbourhood type (Forrest and Yip, 2007; Wang et al., 2017b; Wu, 2012).

Private commodity estates now dominate the housing market whilst older neighbourhoods are facing demolition and redevelopment, raising concerns over the social cohesion amongst residents (Wu and He, 2005). On the other hand, migrant enclaves characterised by strong informality and little state control can equally be found in Chinese cities as well organised work-unit neighbourhoods, which continue to exist. Furthermore, China's position as the world's factory has attracted millions of rural migrants who move to cities in search for better jobs and livelihoods. Despite their importance in supplying the market with cheap labour force, institutional limitations laid upon by the state prevent them from integrating into urban life. As a consequence in many cities, rural migrants are largely confined to living in urban villages amongst fellow rural migrants (Liu et al., 2012). In this study we argue that unlike the Chinese urban middle class, migrants continue to rely on what Park (1915) may describe as the traditional moral order which is based on primary relations and local ties with neighbours (Liu et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2016; Wu and Logan, 2016). By taking a closer look at the different types of neighbourhoods and their residents' social life and using the case of rural migrants, the purpose of this chapter is to explore the dynamisms of the changing moral order of Chinese cities and why certain population groups continue to rely on primary and localised social relations and what role the Chinese state has played. Our study will also draw on a 1420 sized household questionnaire conducted in 2013 in Shanghai and argue that especially rural migrants who have moved from the Chinese countryside to the cities are still highly dependent on neighbourly relations to survive in the city.

The chapter is structured as follows. The first section discusses how the deliberate marginalisation of certain social groups by the Chinese state has forced them to rely

on primary social relations. In the second part we take a closer look at the various neighbourhood types and the community sentiments of different resident groups to substantiate our argument. Thirdly, using the example of rural migrants we propose an alternative urban way of living in Chinese cities and the importance of the state in creating such a divergent path of urban moral order. Finally in our conclusion we try to reconcile the political economic and the human ecological approach in studying the city, arguing that Park's approach can help to connect the somewhat abstract concepts of political economic studies with the lived experience of urban residents.

2.0 Post-socialist Chinese cities – A new moral order in the making

For Park (1915:577) the city is more than a simple congregation of people but rather it should be understood as an institution with its own concept and structure. Prior to China's economic reform, instead of the city itself, the work-unit (*danwei*) was the primary urban institution replicating the social organisation of the rural society into an industrialized economy. Similar to rural areas where residents were governed by village committees, urban residents and their social life were also organised around their respective work-units. However, there was a significant difference between the urban and rural in terms of institution. The urban area was under direct state control and within the system whilst the rural part was largely a self-contained system outside the state's bureaucratic control. Nevertheless, the state also had strong control over the moral order of socialist urban China and the social relations of urban residents were largely neighbourhood based (Whyte and Parish, 1984). The work-unit institution was abolished following the economic reform in China, which entailed the state's gradual retreat from the provision of housing and jobs. After the abolishment of the work-unit system the importance of the city itself came into the forefront. From

this perspective, it could be argued that Park's definition of the city as an institution, only started to emerge after China's transition to a market economy.

One of the main concerns of the Chicago school and Park's research was the changing moral order in cities. Park borrows an old German proverb of 'city air makes men free (Stadtluft macht frei)' (Park 1915:584), to describe the advantage and alluring characteristics of the city such as better chances of social mobility and individual freedom. However, Park was also concerned that the extension of industrial organisation, which is based on 'impersonal relations defined by money, has gone hand in hand with an increasing mobility of the population' (Park 1915:588). The division of the population into different vocational groups rather than social groups, had broken down or modified the traditional social structure based on family ties and local associations and substituted them for organisation of vocational interests (Park 1915:586). Wirth (1938:13) further elaborates that the division of labour and the proliferation of different professions are driven by the 'segmental character and utilitarian accent of interpersonal relations in the city'. In short, the peculiar characteristics of the city exchanged the traditional moral order of urban residents, which is defined by shared sentiments and memories and based on primary and neighbourhood relations, with secondary relations characterised by anonymity and personal interest. Figure 1 provides a simplified illustration of how the moral order differs between the city and the traditional village committee.
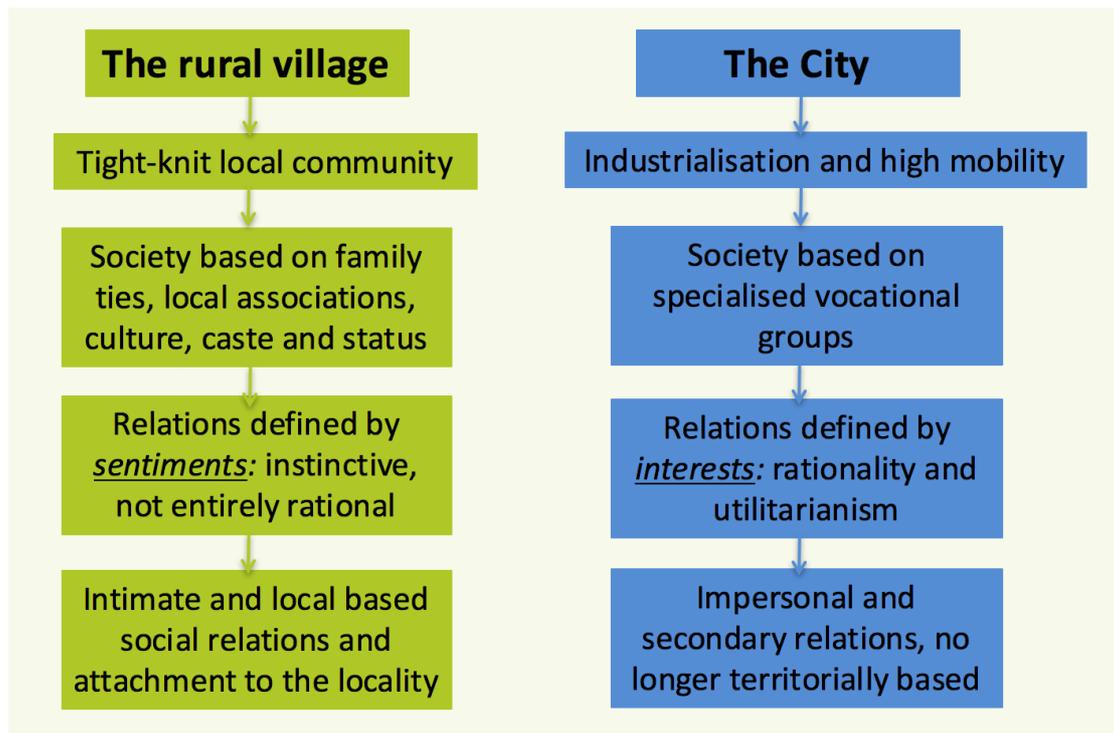
The rural village	The City
Tight-knit local community	Industrialisation and high mobility
Society based on family ties, local associations, culture, caste and status	Society based on specialised vocational groups
Relations defined by *sentiments:* instinctive, not entirely rational	Relations defined by *interests:* rationality and utilitarianism
Intimate and local based social relations and attachment to the locality	Impersonal and secondary relations, no longer territorially based

Figure 1 The key differences between the moral order in the traditional rural society and the city

Such arguments by the Chicago school would also fittingly describe some of the processes in post-socialist Chinese cities. In the hope of breathing free city air filled with better living and job opportunities, millions of rural migrants moved to the coastal cities of China, which has gained the country its reputation as the world's factory. Due to the mass closure of state owned enterprises (SOE), former work-unit employees formed another important source of labour needed for the increasing industrialisation and privatisation of Chinese cities. Slogans such as 'walk out of workplaces and becoming a social man' were very common during this period of transition (Wu, 2008:1094). Urban residents were no longer confined to their work-unit to provide employment and housing. Those, who seek to move away from collective consumption areas monitored by the state, now have the opportunity to live in private estates so long as they have the necessary finances. For instance, rural

migrants who are not eligible for public housing but wish to retain more of their earnings now have the option to live in low-cost informal settlements such as urban villages, where state control is weak. Especially China's middle class has attained greater social mobility through the privatisation of public services and housing provision has allowed them to access a wider social network that reaches beyond the confines of the neighbourhood. The private housing market has also adapted well to the needs of the emerging middle class for higher security, comfort and privacy by offering a packaged suburban lifestyle away from state surveillance and characterised by Western architecture (Wu, 2010c). Concurrently however, scholars have also detected the increasing transience and fluidity of urban social relations in China (Forrest and Yip, 2007). Although middle class residents may prefer anonymity over intense neighbourly interactions, the lack of neighbourly relations does not seem to reduce their attachment to the locality. Instead, existing studies how that the neighbourhood attachment of middle class homeowners remains strong due to their homeowner status and common interest in defending their property against other stakeholders (Pow, 2007; Yip, 2012, page 2012; Zhu et al., 2012).

The discussion so far largely follows the trajectory of moral change described by Park (1915). The industrial organisation and commodification of services in urban China have given its residents higher mobility, which in turn led to the decline of primary relations and attachment to the locality. Although Park's description captures an important aspect of social transformation in the Chinese urban society, Park's work has paid less attention to the role of state in affecting the moral order in cities. In China, the state has played a very significant role in affecting the institution of the city which in turn also has had an impact on the mobility of different population

groups. In post reform China, the demise of state control (tight citizenship) could be celebrated as a process of 'empowering' to some population groups but other social groups such as rural migrants and the urban poor have benefited considerably less from this process (Wu, 2010a). Given these findings, it is therefore important to ask who has benefited from China's urban transition and how that has transformed their social life. Which population groups have benefited less and what are the implications of urbanisation for their moral order?

In order to answer these questions, it is worth to consult the research methods proposed by Park (1915). For Park and the scholars of the Chicago school, the neighbourhood is very useful in researching the nature of the city and its residents as people with similar predispositions tend to congregate in similar areas. For instance, Park (1915:583) refers to East London as a city consisting of one single class. The main differentiation of the Chinese city is based on the extent of state bureaucratized collective consumption, which is represented through different housing tenures (Li and Wu, 2008). Spatial segregation in Chinese cities is thus based on tenure and neighbourhoods with different tenures have also attracted different social groups (Li and Wu, 2008). Neighbourhoods therefore could provide important clues to reveal the extent to which urbanism as a lifestyle has penetrated the life of different urban population segments. In the following section we will discuss the various types of neighbourhoods that can be found in Chinese cities and how they differ in terms of their varying ways of interpersonal relations and their sentiment towards the neighbourhood itself.

3.0 Different Neighbourhoods, different sentiments

The shrinking of work-unit neighbourhoods in post-reform China has led to the emergence of two new types of neighbourhoods. One is the informal development of urban villages to accommodate rural migrants whilst the other is the formal development of commodity housing estates to accommodate the 'new middle class'. In addition, Chinese cities still retain a considerable share of work-unit compounds and traditional neighbourhoods. These neighbourhood types do not only differ from each other in terms of their architectural design and building density but more importantly in terms of their residential composition. It is important to note however, that the description of neighbourhood types here does not equally apply to all Chinese cities since most evidence stem from major cities such as Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou. The ratio of such neighbourhoods also varies considerably across cities whereby cities such as Guangzhou and Shenzhen may have higher shares of urban villages than for instance Shanghai or Beijing (Wu et al., 2013).

1) *Work-unit neighbourhoods* were introduced in the 1950s and represented the main form of housing production of the socialist city until the transition to a market economy in the 1980s (Li et al., 2012). These compounds incorporated work place, residential life as well as social infrastructure such as schools, medical care facilities and markets (Zhu et al., 2012). Ma, (2002) described such neighbourhoods as rich in neighbourly interactions and highly socially cohesive. To this date the governance in such as settlements is still strongly characterised by state control and residential committees continue to play an active role in organising and managing such neighbourhoods. Work-unit compounds are still inhabited by residents working for the state or state owned enterprises and increasingly also retired work-unit employees. Since most residents are affiliated through their shared employer, they also have

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stronger social bonds with each other both as neighbours and as co-workers. Since residents are required to be work-unit members to live in these settlements, the residential composition remains fairly stable although there are also instances where more affluent residents have managed to purchase a private home and subsequently rented out their work-unit housing. It is therefore unsurprising that many residents are engaged in neighbourly interactions and the trust amongst residents is also strong (Forrest and Yip, 2007; Wang et al., 2017a).Moreover, residents are very attached to the neighbourhood and the presence of a well-organised and active residential committee ensures that newly arrived tenants such as rural migrants can also be included into some of the neighbourhood's social activities.

2) *Traditional neighbourhoods* include old neighbourhoods that were built prior to the communist government and are characterised by one to two storey buildings usually with shared kitchen and toilet facilities. The most prominent examples of such neighbourhoods are Beijing's *Hutong* or Shanghai's *Nongtang*. During the socialist era, these neighbourhoods were taken over by the state and distributed to work units as a source of housing for its employees (Gaubatz, 1999). Due to the old age of the buildings and the state's lack of finance to maintain such buildings, many of these neighbourhoods fell into disrepair. Following the emergence of commodity neighbourhoods, most of its more affluent residents have moved out. The residential turnover of traditional neighbourhoods is therefore very high and especially neighbourhoods located in the inner city have experienced the influx of many rural migrants (Wang et al. 2017c). Currently most traditional neighbourhoods tend to be inhabited by low-income residents. Overcrowding is also a major issue in such neighbourhoods as two or generations of a family would share the property.

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Traditional neighbourhoods are governed by residential committees, which are the de facto state at the grassroots level. However, compared to work-unit neighbourhoods which have the backing of the respective work-units, resources of residential committees in traditional neighbourhoods are much more lacking and residents often need to rely on themselves such as repairing shared communal spaces. Many of these neighbourhoods tend to be located in the inner city and therefore also face demolition and redevelopment, which have important implications for residents' community sentiments and feelings towards the neighbourhood. Long-term native residents feel a great sense of belonging and attachment to such areas and also frequently interacting with neighbours (Forrest and Yip, 2007). Yet long-term residents do not necessarily wish to stay in the locality, stating poor housing quality and the influx of migrants as major reasons (Wu, 2012; Wang et al., 2017c). For the migrant residents who are newcomers to these traditional neighbourhoods, their attachment to the locality is weak. Nevertheless they are very happy to remain in the neighbourhood due to proximity to the public transport and the comparatively cheaper price (Wu, 2012). Neighbourly interactions in traditional neighbourhoods are often out of pragmatic necessity for migrant residents whilst native residents prefer to engage only with fellow locals (Wang et al., 2016). The many shared facilities in such neighbourhoods would serve both as a chance for encounter and neighbourly interaction but potentially also as a source of conflict over its usage.

3) *Private commodity estates* were primarily developed following the housing reforms of the state, which essentially transferred the responsibility of housing production from the public sector to the market. Commodity estates now make up the primary housing source for urban residents as statistics show that in 2005 over 50 per cent of

Chinese urban households live in commodity housing whilst less than 40 per cent live in work-unit compounds (Zhu et al., 2012). Commodity estates have proliferated in the suburban parts of cities (Shen and Wu, 2013) and inner city regeneration sites (Wu and He, 2005) and distinguish themselves through their Western architecture style as well as privatised services such as green space provision (Xiao et al., 2016). Commodity housing residents are often of better socio-economic status and are closest to what could be described as an urbanite in terms of their level of professionalization and their tendency to withdraw from local interactions (Li et al., 2012). Their preference for privacy and comfort is also reflecting their wish to lead a more urban and metropolitan lifestyle. However, interestingly unlike Park's prediction of demise in local attachment, residents in commodity neighbourhoods feel very attached to their local area although not because of their relations with fellow neighbours. Instead, homeownership and pride to be living in a private condominium are the primary sources of neighbourhood attachment (Pow and Kong, 2007; Zhu et al., 2012).

However, it is also important to note that not all residents living in private estates necessarily belong to the middle class. Another growing sub-category of privatised homes is relocation estates (*dongqian anzhi fang*), which are built to accommodate former residents of redeveloped areas. These neighbourhoods are often situated in less favourable locations compared to the previous home of relocated residents but have considerably better housing quality and more living space although still below the quality of purchased commodity estates. Residents own the property and have to pay service charge. With regards to neighbourhood governance, relocation estates are governed by residential associations rather than juweihui (residential committees).

However, residents tend to have a lower socio-economic status and are also more engaged with their neighbours (Wang et al., 2017a), indicating that the urban lifestyle has less influence on them.

4) *Informal settlements* primarily consist of urban villages and have attracted by far the most attention from researchers (Chung, 2010, page 20; Li and Wu, 2013; Song et al., 2008; Wu et al., 2013). Given the large amount of literature on urban villages, we will not describe the development process of urban villages and instead elaborate on its residential composition and the interpersonal relationships of its residents. Urban villages can be considered the Chinese version of what Park refers to as foreign immigrant colonies and resemble them in terms of the high presence of rural migrants but also their difficulty to '*assimilate*' into the host society (Park 1915:597). Figures show that migrant residents can account for up to 80 per cent of the urban village population in large cities including Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen (Chung, 2010, page 20; Wang et al., 2017b). Indigenous villagers who hold a local rural hukou and are the landlords of urban villages make up the other major residential group. However, the relationship between migrants and indigenous villagers remains relatively superficial despite the fact that both groups often share a similar rural background (Chung, 2010; Liu et al., 2012). An often cited reason for the paradoxical view of indigenous villagers towards migrants is because migrant tenants are considered by rural landlords as a vital source of income but also a source of unruly activities (Chung, 2010). As a consequence, migrants rely on social ties with fellow migrants who mostly live in the same urban village (Liu et al., 2012, 2015). Although migrant residents in urban villages resemble immigrant enclaves in terms of their inability to adopt similar values as the mainstream society, many migrant residents

have found their own way to settle into such neighbourhoods. Since urban villages are built on rural land, the governance of such neighbourhoods is still within the jurisdiction of the village committee, which is unable to cope with the disproportionally large number of migrant tenants. The lack of a strong formal governance structure has therefore enabled migrant residents to create their own migrant community that not only provides support for everyday matters but in some cases also lead to the emergence of a migrant economy. *Zhejiang village* in Beijing (Ma and Xiang, 1998) and *Xiaohubei* in Guangzhou (Liu et al., 2015) for instance both possess a vibrant migrant economy based on garment production and show that migrants can also participate actively in the city by relying on the migrant community.

This brief account of the various neighbourhood types in Chinese cities reveals that the urban way of living characterised by anonymity, detachment from the neighbourhood and secondary relationship does not apply to all segments of the Chinese urban society. Residents living in well organised work-unit compounds but also informal urban villages still display a significantly level of local interactions and high dependence on the neighbourhood community. At the risk of over-generalising, in the next section we will use the social life of rural migrants at the local level as evidence to suggest that the traditional moral order continues to exist in the post-socialist Chinese city.

5.0 The migrant's way of life in Chinese cities

Studies often cite the marginalised life of rural migrants as evidence for the urban-rural dualism in Chinese urban society (Fan, 2002; Jiang et al., 2012; Roberts, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, it was primarily the better-educated residents who were employed in favourable professions in the city that benefitted from China's reforms. However, rural migrants have benefited little from the commodification of public services. Although rural migrants form an integral part of Chinese cities by supplying the world's factory with cheap labour, they are otherwise largely isolated from the city. The lack of mobility of migrants is caused by the privatization of public services such as schooling and medical care, which their income cannot cover. The social surplus generated by rural migrants mostly benefits their employers, whilst the local state does not act on behalf of migrants to negotiate with enterprises for a fairer distribution of such social surpluses. Instead, the local state often uses its regulatory power to improve the city's economic competitiveness by investing in infrastructure such as airports and deepwater ports but also by minimising resistance stemming from workers' unions (Wu, 2010a). In this sense although rural migrants may share a similar social class and are employed in similar professions, they lack the ability to mobilise as a collective entity in order to negotiate for better conditions. Park's (1915) argument that the division of labour would result in different vocational groups which according to Wirth (1938:14) would gain wider representation and more influence in the city based on their size is therefore effectively removed by the Chinese state. As a consequence, although migrants lack a sense of attachment and integration to the city (Wu, 2012; Yue et al., 2013). it is because of the fact that they cannot afford to participate in the city life rather than their increased mobility.

So instead of changing into urbanised residents who supposedly only have superficial personal interactions, what kind social life do rural migrants in Chinese cities actually experience and how does that shape their moral order? To shed light onto the

localised social network of migrant residents, we draw on a household survey conducted in Shanghai in 2013 with 1420 households including both native and migrant residents. We argue that the moral order of rural migrants in Chinese cities does not only underlie the trajectory of change articulated by the Chicago school. The survey was carried out in Shanghai at a citywide scale by a group of professional surveyors whereby the team leader was a former staff member of the Shanghai Statistical Bureau. We adopted a two-stage random sampling strategy and interviewed randomly selected 40 households in 35 juweihui (residential committees). In total the survey yielded 1420 valid samples including 1,046 Shanghai residents holding an urban hukou, 128 residents holding a local rural hukou as well as 86 migrants holding an urban hukou from another city than Shanghai and 158 migrants holding a rural hukou. Despite the lower number of migrant respondents a comparison of our survey sample and official statistics show that our data is still representative and will not affect the analysis of this study. Further information about how we collected the survey data and the reliability of the survey can be found in (Wang et al., 2017a).

Various studies have shown that the social network of migrants in Chinese cities consist largely of ties with fellow migrants (Li and Wu, 2010; Liu et al., 2012; Yue et al., 2013). Liu et al's (2012) study of the social network of migrants living in Guangzhou's urban villages show that more than 70 per cent of migrant residents primarily rely on their kin ties. Furthermore, migrant respondents state that more than 60 per cent of their social network consists of ties with migrants coming from the same region or hometown (*laoxiang*). With regards to neighbourhood based social relations, our household survey in Shanghai reveals that a significant share of both local and migrant residents still retain a very localised social network. Table 1

presents the frequency of three types of neighbourly interactions including visiting each other's homes, helping each other and greeting each other. It is important to note here that table 1 asked respondents about how often they interacted with neighbours belonging to the same group as them e.g.: migrants were asked how often they interacted with other migrant neighbours whilst local Shanghai residents were asked how often they interacted with other local Shanghai neighbours. The reason why we differentiated between interacting with fellow group members and members belonging to another social group is because our previous study has found that hukou status has an important impact on the neighbourly behaviours of residents (Wang et al., 2016). Our survey results show that more than 53 per cent of rural migrant residents visit their migrant neighbours on an occasional or frequent basis. In comparison, more than 44 per cent of local Shanghai residents state that they sometimes or frequently visit each the home of their local neighbours or vice versa. Furthermore, around 67 per cent of migrant respondents report that they sometimes or frequently exchange help with other migrant neighbours whilst more than 70 per cent of native Shanghai residents do the same with other native neighbours. Finally, nearly 80 per cent of migrant residents exchange greetings with their migrant neighbours whilst more than 88 per cent of native residents greet their native neighbours.

Table 1 Frequency of in-group neighbourly interactions (in %)

Visiting each other (N=1200)	Locals	Rural migrants
Frequently	14.30	9.49
Sometimes	30.04	44.30
Seldom	35.99	25.95
Never	19.67	20.25
Helping each other (N=1200)		
Frequently	13.92	13.93
Sometimes	57.49	53.16
Seldom	25.14	29.11
Never	3.36	3.80
Greeting each other (N=1200)		
Frequently	43.47	43.04
Sometimes	44.63	36.71
Seldom	10.65	18.35
Never	1.15	1.90

The evidence presented in table 1 already indicates that a large share of rural migrants and native Shanghai residents are still very engaged with their neighbours. Our results here also confirm existing studies such as Wu and Logan (2016) who also found that a large share of migrants continue to have strong neighbourly relations. In addition, our survey shows that migrants do not restrict their neighbourly interactions to fellow migrants. Migrants also engage with their local Shanghai neighbours as a means to gain more support to integrate into the city (Wang et al. 2016). Table 2 presents the frequency of neighbourly interactions between migrant and local residents reported by both native and migrant respondents. More than 28 per cent of rural migrant respondents state that their sometimes or frequently visit the homes of their native neighbours or vice versa. Furthermore, more than half of migrant respondents report that exchange support with native neighbours on a frequent of occasional basis whilst only a quarter of native residents exchange help with migrant residents. Finally,

nearly 80 per cent of migrant respondents state that they frequently or sometimes exchange greetings with their native neighbours.

Table 2 Frequency of neighbourly interactions between migrants and locals (in %)

Visiting each other (N=1200)	Locals	Rural migrants
Frequently	1.15	3.80
Sometimes	9.79	24.68
Seldom	32.44	46.20
Never	56.53	25.32
Helping each other (N=1200)		
Frequently	2.21	6.33
Sometimes	23.61	45.57
Seldom	48.56	39.87
Never	25.53	8.23
Greeting each other (N=1200)		
Frequently	11.90	29.75
Sometimes	37.62	50.00
Seldom	36.47	17.09
Never	13.92	3.16

Frequent local interactions have also significantly affected the way rural migrants construct their sense of social solidarity and contradict Park's assertion that social solidarity in an urbanised world is based largely on common interest rather than sentiment and habit (1915:587). A household survey conducted in Shanghai shows that rural migrants have stronger feelings of mutual care, trust and amity towards those native residents with whom they also frequently exchange support and visits (Wang et al., 2017a). Furthermore, the survey also shows that rural migrants tend to be generally more trustful towards native population (Wang et al., 2017b) indicating that good neighbourly relations with their native neighbours may also affect their general sense of trust and sentiment towards the urban population.

Table 3 social trust between migrants and locals in Shanghai by hukou status (in %)

	Most locals (asked to migrants) / migrants (asked to locals) living in Shanghai are trustworthy (1=highly disagree, 5=highly agree, in %)				
Hukou status	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
Local urban	0.93	12.09	44.16	34.19	8.63
Rural migrants	0.39	2.13	29.15	56.28	12.06

(Source: adapted from Wang et al., 2015)

Conclusion

Research on the political economic structure of China has matured along with the economy of the country and has arguably reached an important turning point. Social issues related to the integration of rural migrants, the decline of social cohesion and overall concerns for the harmony of the Chinese society are calling for a more nuanced understanding of the consequences of urbanisation (Wang et al., 2017c). Park's paper reminds us that simply understanding the political economic structure of the city is not enough and that a more human centred focus is needed to really understand the nature of the city. The human ecology approach not only reveals insights of the city but also the essential nature or as Park calls it the *Gesetzmaessigkeit* of humans (1915:581). Research on the mundane everyday life of urban residents helps us to unpack the somewhat abstract concepts of state entrepreneurialism or state retreat. It helps us understand how state and market processes can also have an impact upon the moral order of societies. This in turn reveals that the commoditisation of services and increasing reliance of money can also replace our primary relations with anonymity and utilitarian social behaviour. Park's explanation of the industrial organisation and increasing commoditisation of

urban processes resonate with the growing number of middle class residents in the

Chinese urban society. The privatisation of housing provision coupled with the

closure of most state owned enterprises meant the demise of the socialist city based

on the work-unit system. Urban residents employed in favourable professions thus

gained the opportunity to escape from the state controlled system and to retreat into

gated private estates characterised by privacy and the supposed modern way of living.

The social solidarity and attachment of residents in commodity estate (Wang et al.,

2017a) is strong, but as asserted by Park (1915) and Wirth (1936), such sentiments are

mainly built upon their common interest. In China's case, residents often share the

same interest to defend themselves against the exploitations of private developers and

rogue estate management as well as their shared sense homeownership (Pow, 2007;

Yip, 2012).

However, despite the relevance of the Chicago school's contribution to the

understanding of Chinese cities, it is also important to consider the specific political

economic context of China and the necessity to examine the role of state in shaping

and creating alternative pathways of urban life. In this sense, the Chinese case also

contributes to the debate with some novel findings. China's government has played an

undeniable role in the marginalisation of certain urban population segments (Wu,

2010a). The greatly varying levels of neighbourly relations and sentiments and

different reasons of neighbourhood attachment that can be found in China's urban

neighbourhoods indicate that more marginalised residents and those who are affiliated

with the state lead a different life than what Park has predicted. Work-unit

compounds, which are a living legacy of socialist China, continue to exert

considerable influence on its residents through its well-organised neighbourhood

governance structure. On the other hand, the lack of formal governance has led to the emergence of migrant economies and communities in informal settlements. Our brief analysis of the neighbourhood types in China reveals that different segments of the population also experience Chinese urbanity in variegated ways. Our study chose to focus on the social life of rural migrants and showed that the state's intervention has effectively excluded rural migrants from harvesting their benefit from participating in the market economy (Wu, 2010a). As a consequence, rural migrants tend to rely on what Park considers as the traditional moral order, which is based on neighbourhood and primary relations. Our survey results show that migrants can improve their livelihood and chance of survival by depending on their kins and fellow migrants but also neighbourhood relationships with both fellow migrants and members of the host society. Our findings here also conform with existing studies on migrants in urban China (Wang et al., 2016; Wu and Logan, 2016). It is these primary relations and local sentiments that shape their sense of solidarity and trust towards other people (Wang et al., 2017a, 2017b), which is in stark contrast to the shared social solidarity based on common interest between middle class residents.

The Chinese city therefore does not strictly follow Park's and the Chicago school's observations as the role of the state is much more accentuated in the Chinese case. Active state intervention in the various aspects of city life and its development processes has produced various forms of urban life. This study has tried to illustrate one of the presumably many ways of urban living by focusing on rural migrants. The social life and moral order of migrants was not a voluntary choice but rather a necessary means to respond the actions of the state. Similarly, China's urban poor, consisting of laid-off state workers, may also find themselves in the same situation

where they have to rely on their informal social relations to get by in the city. One interesting question for future studies would be to investigate whether those marginalised residents who have managed to integrate into the mainstream society would retain their traditional moral order or rather adopt similar preferences and interests as the new middle-class. In this study we also consciously attempted to reconcile two seemingly contradicting approaches of research by firstly explaining how the China's specific political economic context has shaped the opportunities of rural migrants and how this in turn would affect their social life. The outcome has hopefully shown that the structural and the human ecology approach can be combined to produce an even more nuanced understanding of how political economic forces can also shape the nature of urban societies.

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