1. Introduction to the *Handbook on Urban Development in China*: urbanization with Chinese characteristics

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INTRODUCTION

Urban China has undergone seismic change in its physical and socioeconomic landscape over the last four decades. Urban life in Mao's China was simply an extension of the regime's faith in the superiority of teleological planning, and Chinese cities were given a central role in the socialist industrialization programme. All aspects of urban existence were organized along the imperative of production. Urban architectural landscapes were characterized by buildings of monotonous design and prosaic outlook. The ethos of egalitarianism inherent in Soviet practices and the functionality logic of Le Corbusier's modernist principles of design determined the allocation of space. Scarcity was permanent, with the rationing system effectively restricting personal consumption to subsistence level, lest excessive personal indulgence misappropriate resources for unproductive purposes and thus decelerate the pace of the industrialization programme.

Urban life was in general highly organized, disciplined and mundane, with expression of individuality severely circumscribed by politics and material conditions. Yet most urban dwellers probably felt blessed with their 'privilege' of residing in the cities, aware as they were of the deprivation and desperation of the Chinese peasantry. The concomitant operation of centralized control over employment through the work unit system (*danwei*) and the unified job allocation arrangement, and the effective regulation of personal movement through the residential permit system (*hukou*), powerfully sustained the impermeability of the rural-urban divide.

PROGRESS AND ENHANCEMENT

The narratives of Chinese cities as conditions of stasis, segregation and frugality are, however, ruthlessly exposed as irrelevant by the incessant waves of reform in the post-Mao era. China's meteoric rise as a global economic power is aptly described as 'one of the transformative events of our time' (Bracken 2012, p. 18) and its impact on the outlook of Chinese cities has been tremendous. In short, urban transformation in the reform era has unleashed unbridled optimism, insatiable ambition, as well as an unprecedented level of entrepreneurial energy among local officials, business actors and private citizens across urban China. In this process of urban transformation several characteristics are discernible.

Expansion

Chinese cities have been expanding rapidly in terms of their number, geographic size and population over the last four decades. In 1978, only 18 per cent of Chinese people lived in cities, the figure has risen to 57 per cent in 2016 (see X. Zhang, this volume). The central planning regime, having served the principle of local autarky that had discouraged the interflow of capital across regions, is now experimenting with a plethora of new ideas (Wu 2015). Marketization has further induced an accelerated influx of capital and labour to the cities, starting from the coastal regions to the emerging arena of western China with the Belt and Road initiative. This implies a growing demand for space for investment, residence and development, and there has been widespread expansion of prefecture administration boundaries across the country. It will probably take some effort, for example, for ‘Old Beijingers’ to convince their grandchildren that the urban area of the city was mostly located inside the Third Ring Road about three decades ago.

Due to the privileges attached to the status of prefecture administration, and the vanity of local officials, there was a strong push by county governments for upgrading to prefecture level during the early years of the reform era when the national government was relatively relaxed over restructuring requests. Consequently, by 2007 the number of prefecture level cities (*dijishi*) had reached 283 compared with just 97 in 1978 (Chien 2010). The reform period also witnessed a rise in the number of big cities in the country. By 2017, the number of Chinese cities with a permanent population (based on local *hukou* status) of at least one million had reached 147 (21 jingji 2017). To put this into perspective, only around 500 cities worldwide have populations exceeding one million people.

Affluence

The economic growth of post-Mao China has been phenomenal and well documented. Decades of accelerating growth have transformed the urban landscape. Images of troops of working class people in drab grey and blue outfits navigating the main streets on their bicycles have largely been confined to history. By 2016, the number of automobiles on Chinese roads had reached 172 million, and 40 cities had car ownership levels in excess of one million (China Daily 2016). Urban planners and transport controllers in China today are probably resigned to a sense of defeatism as the paralysis of traffic is more or less routine, with local networks simply unable to handle the daily volume of automobiles and commercial vehicles.

Frustrated drivers can at least comfort themselves with views of the impressive urban skylines that have superseded drab Soviet-style architecture. Even in second or third tier cities in China today, one can easily find high-rise buildings with glass facades or outrageous architectural features to the extent that the State Council officially banned ‘oddly-shaped buildings’ in 2016 (Zheng 2016).¹ These trapped drivers may also find some distraction in the flashing billboards that everywhere inform passers-by about the latest trends in luxury goods or forthcoming movies. The spectacular rise in individual incomes in the reform era has restored the consumer sovereignty of Chinese citizens while the policy of ‘promoting domestic consumption’ (*kuoda neixu*) has further fuelled the pursuit of personal enjoyment and entertainment in urban China. Between 2006 and 2016, urban households doubled their consumption expenditure (Statista 2018a), and China currently

ranks second behind the United States in the global consumption of passenger cars, apparel, cosmetics and personal care products (Statista 2018b).

Mobility

Marketization has removed many shackles that previously constrained freedom of movement among the Chinese population. While the *hukou* system still officially exists, its effectiveness in regulating the flow of people has been greatly undermined. Chinese peasants are pushed and pulled to the cities. While the household responsibility system, which establishes individual households as the basic unit for agricultural production, implies greater freedom for the Chinese peasantry, it also reduces significantly the welfare and economic support given to rural households. Luckily for them, the imperative of efficiency in the post-Mao economy has unleashed a huge demand for cheap labour. As a result, there has been unremitting movement of peasants into the cities over the last four decades and it is estimated that about 200 million rural workers are involved in this process.

Yet it is not only the peasants who are on the move; the urban population is also far more mobile than it was under Mao. The general hunger for talent among cities with global ambitions, the craze for performance and profits by entrepreneurs across the country, and the reform of a welfare system that allows greater portability of benefits, all contribute to the massive relocation of the labour force. The proliferation of highway networks and the huge investment in high-speed rail projects attest to the unprecedented upsurge in the mobility of the population. Nevertheless, the rise in mobility is not simply confined to the physical dimension; it also has expression in a social form. With the demise of state sector and central planning mechanism dominance, politics and party-state directives no longer solely determine rank and status. While political capital and personal connections remain essential for climbing up the social ladder and attaining economic success (Bourdieu 1984), cultural, social and network capital (Urry 2007), or simply anything that helps enhance one's overall competitiveness can critically influence one's life chances and career prospects in the reform era. Politics, of course, remains central, but there are multiple routes to success in urban China today.

Diversity

The end of teleological planning in the post-Mao years denotes the demise of the forces that sustained absolute uniformity and discipline in Chinese society, and the fading of revolutionary fervour among the Party leadership offers more room for individuality and spontaneity. The party-state's capacity to impose effective and pervasive control over people's lives remains, yet the general rise in income and the overall retreat of the state in the economy have unleashed the pursuit of individual ambitions, personal desires, self-interest and preferred lifestyles. The accelerated movement of people has contributed to the diversity of urban populations in terms of ethnicity, cultural habits, social backgrounds, economic status, values and dispositions. The open-door policy of the post-Mao years has provided further exposure to, and stimulation of, new ideas as well. Expatriates, tourists, business partners, traders, overseas scholars and students can be sources of 'spiritual revolution', as political conservatives called it in the early 1980s, and yet enclaves of these foreigners in cities are also harbingers of diversity.

General urban affluence also enables further cultural stimulation and encounters. The massive purchasing power of the urban population has sustained an unabated craze for information and novelty. Access to the internet is the key to satisfying this appetite. The 1.44 billion mobile phones purchased in China have made her the country with the largest number of users in the world (Statista 2018c), and there are also 641 million active internet users in the country today (AHK Greater China n.d.). Both the rapid rise of Tencent, the largest IT giant in China and a leading player in the world economy with a market value of 500 billion US dollars (Jiang and Kwok 2018), and the rocketing of advertising revenue in China, totalling 380 billion RMB yuan in 2016 (CIW Team 2016), confirm the population's heightened exposure to marketing messages.

The flood of information is further reinforced by the proliferation of traditional media. There are more than 3000 television stations and about 1900 newspapers operating in China today (Statista 2018d). Although media censorship and political control are still very much enforced, Chinese citizens, particularly residents in urban areas, are exposed to an unprecedented volume of information on the possibilities and imagination of lifestyle, values and ambition. The 500 000 plus NGOs (China Daily 2012) operating in China may not share the same degree of freedom and autonomy enjoyed by their counterparts in liberal political environments, yet their very existence indicates the growing diversity of Chinese society and the people's enthusiasm in pursuing their distinct agenda and interests.

DISLOCATION AND TENSION

Life in urban China in the post-Mao years is certainly not just about exuberance, glory and advancement. The demise of the old socialist system of controls and discipline may also imply the disappearance of a sense of security and certitude, and ruptures with habits and conventions could also generate confusion and anxiety. The freedom and choices inherent in market reforms could, on the one hand, unleash opportunities for upward mobility for those with wits and competitiveness, but less entrepreneurial souls may find this new logic horrifying and challenging. Even party-state bureaucrats may take time to adjust to the logic of the new era as the repertoire of governing during the revolutionary years is rendered obsolete, irrelevant and even counterproductive. While some may succeed in adjusting to the changing environment and reinventing themselves, others may choose to deny or even resist the strong current of change and spontaneity. In short, there are several major dislocations unleashed by the urbanization process.

Inequality

The outlook of Mao's cities was defined by the ethos of egalitarianism. Standardization was the keyword in allocation, with one's entitlements religiously linked to one's respective rank and position in the political and economic hierarchy. Yet social provisions and residential space, as well as income, were distributed with the imperative of minimal differentials. With monopolistic control over supplies, or 'dictatorship over needs', as Feher and others (1986) put it, the party-state was in a commanding position in narrowing the gap in well-being among the Chinese population. There were, of course, great variations in terms of life chances and privileges between party and non-party members

and among people with different class labels, as depicted in Djilas' classic work on 'new class' in socialist society (Djilas 1982). However, these differences were well covered by the facade of equality in the Mao period. One could find a high degree of uniformity in the architectural and social outlook of the urban setting during those years. Chinese cities were populated by residents mostly indistinguishable in terms of their income status and possessions; they were 'comrades' sharing a life of frugality and subsistence.

Deng Xiaoping's call for 'letting some people to get rich first' is historic as, for the first time, inequality had been endorsed and embraced by the Party. Cities awash with economic opportunities have become major battlefields for people with ambition and entrepreneurial drive to try their luck in the scramble for rewards in the age of marketization. Income and wealth are rewarded according to one's talent, luck or social networks. The resultant distribution of wealth is expressed in the growing demarcation between clusters of different economic status observable in terms of residence, consumption patterns, schooling choices and public profiles. Nevertheless, the gap is not always defined by success in the market. It can be inherited. The *hukou* system has been undermined, but it still matters. Non-local *hukou* holders are still subject to harassment or even expulsion by local governments. The clearing up of the 'low-end population' in Beijing attests to the vulnerability of and lack of dignity given to these 'outsiders'.

Uncertainty

A market economy thrives on innovation, change and, as Schumpeter elegantly phrased it, 'creative destruction' (1940). Competitiveness hinges upon successful and swift adaptation to profit signals and volatility in consumer preferences. Institutional permanence and organizational stability are thus not necessarily deemed as virtues. The rapid expansion of the population in the cities, due to the lure of economic opportunities of urban commerce and the diversification of economic activities, render urban life in reform era China even more hectic, messy and perturbing. Not only have the rigidity and shackles inherent in socialist urban management gone with the advent of marketization, so have the security and predictability that the former used to provide. The state sector, which still employs a substantial portion of the urban labour force, can no longer offer life-tenure and cradle-to-grave welfare benefits, while the imperative of efficiency and 'hardening of budgetary constraints' imply more flexible contractual arrangements and thus fragility in the position of employees in enterprises of different ownership types. Unlike in Mao's China when urban dwellers' career prospects and life chances were preordained at the time of their job assignment after graduation, the economic well-being of city workers today is mostly contingent upon fluctuations in the market and their capacity to sustain competitiveness. State policy of removing workers from active service in the state sector, better known as *xiagang*, has also created unprecedented waves of unemployment in urban China (Cai 1999). According to one estimate, about 30 million state employees were affected between 1998 and 2004. However, social embeddedness, as Peter Evans calls it, which refers to the ability of the state to comprehend, connect and respond to socioeconomic changes (Evans 1995), can also affect the economic fortunes of a city and the consequent economic security it can afford for its population. This is a function of bureaucratic competence and the level of engagement between state and society. Unfortunately, participation and accountability are not central features of China's urban management system.

Degradation

The city, as Joel Kotkin suggests (2005), is a product of human attempts to overcome natural conditions and efforts to create a new workable order. It is supposed to be a platform for political, economic and social activities, and its creation entails gigantic investment in infrastructure, facilities and transportation. Consequently, urban life should be convenient, comfortable and safe, and on that basis the economy would prosper. Even in Mao's China where shortages and poverty prevailed, investments in urban facilities were party-state priorities. Urban workers in state enterprises were the 'aristocracy of the proletariat' as they enjoyed access to much better food and services and in general had a higher quality of life compared to Chinese peasants. The affluence attributed to the market reforms in post-Mao China enables this policy approach to be elevated to the next level. Cities are desperate to be connected with the major clusters of commerce and industry, and investment in telecommunications and transportation has been phenomenal. Connections to national high-speed rail and highway networks and the construction of airports are now the symbols of development of aspiring cities across China.

The personal ambitions of local cadres add further fuel to the construction boom as 'face saving projects' (*mianzi gongcheng*) – new roads, bridges, spectacular architecture and mega-structures – are seen as key leverage in the competition for promotion among officials. Chinese cities have to be modern, cool, fashionable and flamboyant. It is, however, debatable whether this approach of incessant urban investment and construction is sustainable. Its damage to the natural habitat of Chinese cities has been colossal. The general disregard for the impact on the environment, the overconcentration of population in mega-cities, the poorly coordinated construction projects and the insatiable desire for immediate material enjoyment have contributed to the emergence of environmental catastrophes across urban China. In most Chinese cities, water and air quality has been compromised, food safety is a genuine concern, traffic jams are commonplace, and waste management is a challenge for urban administrators. Sand storms rampaging across northern China are just one of many powerful reminders of the rapid degradation of China's natural conditions exacerbated by the unabated process of urbanization and deforestation over the last four decades.

Confrontation

Mao's cities were theatres of political drama. Over the years, urban residents were involved in countless political campaigns with well-specified agendas ranging from promoting production, criticizing counter-revolutionaries and rightists, fighting against the American imperialists, to destroying the Party machinery captured by alleged revisionists. There was no space safe from the call for participation as study sessions, criticism meetings and struggles were organized in the workplace, schools and living quarters as well as the town hall. These events were well organized with carefully orchestrated mobilization. These were, however, primarily staged spectacles initiated by the Party. Spontaneous outbursts of sentiment and bottom-up pursuit of justice were more or less unheard of.

It is certainly inaccurate to say that Chinese citizens were fully contented with their lives under socialism or totally convinced by the Party line and thus did not feel the urge to voice their bitterness and concerns. Instead, Milton Friedman (1968) attributed their

acquiescence to the high ‘cost of dissidence’ under a socialist order. In short, troublemakers paid a high price for their unsanctioned behaviour: they would lose their jobs and welfare entitlements for the family, and find no alternative to state support. Marketization has fundamentally reversed this situation and state domination has been significantly undermined. Developments in the post-Mao years have facilitated exposure to new ideas and values and nurtured diversity and idiosyncrasy. Cities as hubs of information and global connections always offered themselves as platforms for advocacy, expression and attention-seeking. The availability of resources inherent in the growing affluence, and the emergence of a critical mass in any disposition and lifestyle also help empower those who feel aggrieved.

These spontaneous efforts, however, may meet with strong resistance from the state. Cities are also built to project power, and political authority is in general enthusiastic about conveying the image of a legitimate ruler in urban areas where most social elites and key allies of the regime reside. The post-Mao leadership, despite its reformist image over the last four decades, still rejects all challenges to its authority. Direct challenges to its power in urban centres appear to be particularly provocative. The tragedy in 1989, when thousands of protesting students occupied Tiananmen Square in the heart of the capital city and sites across other Chinese cities, was destined for a brutal response from the state. The space for protest and individual expression may have expanded in the post-Mao years, but the regime still finds these bottom-up, unpredictable and unsanctioned mobilizations from below threatening because they could potentially coalesce into a bigger movement that challenges one-party rule. At the same time, the vast majority of protests in China are focused on narrow, material grievances that do not directly threaten the regime (Lorentzen 2017). Urban China is the space where altercation, negotiation and contention unfold.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT CHINESE STYLE

The juxtaposition of progress and degradation, exuberance and tension, and of rising inequality amidst unabated growth in income and affluence, coupled with mounting pressure on cities’ infrastructure and institutions attributed to the massive flow of rural-urban migration, are common to countries witnessing rapid urban development. China is no exception. The China experience, nevertheless, is unique. Its distinction is related to its trajectory of market reforms. It is, as Barry Naughton (1996) described, a process ‘growing out of the plan’. That is, despite the embrace of capitalism by the post-Mao leadership, socialist legacies still matter and urban developments in the reform era have been affected by this policy and institutional inheritance. Central to this impact is the tradition of a strong state, which is expressed in the political as well as the economic realm.

Sebastian Heilmann (2018) describes China as a ‘red swan’ for her distinctive trajectory of development: the political resilience of the Communist party-state amidst a rapidly expanding and internationally competitive economy. Contrary to conventional assumptions, the Chinese Communists appear to be capable of rising to the challenge of running a diverse and competitive economy, whereas most communist parties in the former Soviet bloc quickly faded away with the advent of marketization. The preservation of Chinese Communist Party dominance is, in fact, the defining feature of the so-called ‘China model’. Deng Xiaoping was no Gorbachev and he saw reforms as the way to redeem, not

to replace, the Party. The Party is prepared to retreat from economic management, to rewrite the Constitution and adapt ideology, to embrace foreign investment and tourists, and even to create a facade of legality and tolerate a certain degree of political freedom. Yet make no mistake, it will never entertain the idea that its monopoly of political power can be negotiated. China has remained an authoritarian regime in the post-Mao era (Dickson 2016), and Xi Jinping's administration has overseen an intensification in party control (Minzner 2017).

The impact on the sociopolitical contours of urban China of limited checks on state power is apparent. There has been considerable development in China's civil society in the reform period, with a half a million NGOs now working on different agendas and concerns. Around 7000 of these are overseas NGOs (Hsu et al. 2016). These domestic and foreign organizations are, however, surviving at the mercy of the regime, and a new Chinese Foreign NGO Law took effect in 2017 with the aim of tightening government control over the sector. Unlike their counterparts in other more liberal settings, they are deprived of a free media that can provide outlets for their concerns and advocacy, access to an unrestricted flow of information that would help them to connect with like-minded people or a sympathetic audience, and, most importantly, a strong tradition of judicial independence and legal professionalism that can offer a buffer against unlawful encroachment by the authorities. The definition of legitimate interest and individual rights appears arbitrary and impromptu, as the letter of the law and even the constitution do not always command the respect and binding effect that is expected. For a regime with a perverse sense of insecurity and obsession with total control, this implies an insistence on maximum freedom to uproot any potential threat to its authority, absolute autonomy from criticism, for extensive intrusion into the private domain, and total immunity from pressure for unabashed inoculation of Party doctrines into the minds of the governed. In the name of *shehui hexie*, or social harmony, the Party feels perfectly legitimate in suppressing and containing any unhealthy or corrosive ideas and behaviour, although much of this may simply be seen as harmless unconventional and alternative lifestyles.

The authoritarian nature of the state also shapes intergovernmental relationships in China. The People's Republic of China remains a unitary state with the national government at the apex of a vast administrative hierarchy (Chung and Lam 2010). The early phase of reform was characterized by the logics of decentralization and incentives (*fangquan rangli*), with a wide range of discretionary powers being delegated to local government. Local experiments, unsanctioned policy deviations and innovations have been tolerated and even encouraged. The central government, however, maintains a tight control over two essential aspects of administration: personnel management and resource allocation. The Chinese Communist Party is renowned for its extensive control over personnel appointments. The nomenclatural system may have gone through some modifications in recent years, with local levels being given greater powers of appointment, but it still provides the Party with effective leverage over confirmation or veto of major cadre appointments at every level of administration. The extensive network of party schools also reinforces its grip over the bureaucracy, as it serves as a nationwide conduit for elucidating the latest Party directives and instructions to leading cadres at all levels (Pieke 2009).

The loyalty and cooperation of local cadres are cemented by the centre's control over resources. The national government's position over the allocation of fiscal resources

was significantly strengthened by the tax reforms introduced in 1994. Alarmed by the declining share of public expenditure in terms of GDP, as well as the shrinking size of the central portion of total revenues collected in the 1980s due to decentralization and declining state involvement in the economy, the reforms were intended to strengthen the centre's regulatory power over the national economy as well as fiscal control over local governments by dividing the taxes into three categories: state tax, local tax and shared tax. In short, the changes allowed the national government to redistribute fiscal resources with specific conditions attached. Local finance is now heavily dependent on downward transfer from the centre and most of these allocations are in turn delivered through earmarked grants that can only be used for policy purposes designated by central government. Thus, together with its effective control over career mobility of leading cadres at subnational levels, the central government is in a strong position to oversee local governance and development. When there is a need, the party-state is still very capable and empowered to regulate or reverse unsanctioned experiment or undesirable development at local level. Local cadres craving promotion and recognition are highly motivated to respond to policy signals or to second-guess the priorities and preference of senior leaders. Intense competition among cities is evident, and this is expressed in the installation of landmark architecture and skyscrapers, massive investment in infrastructure, and most importantly the single-minded pursuit of GDP growth. The combination of the self-interest of local cadres and the national goal of unabated growth creates the impetus behind the dynamism and restlessness in urban China today. However, whether these expansive trends are healthy and sustainable is disputable.

The statist tradition of Communist China is also manifest in the economic realm. Gradualism is another cornerstone of post-Mao economic reforms. It entails policy experimentation and policy variations across China, as well as retrospective endorsement of unsanctioned moves at the local level that deliver desirable effects by national government (Shirk 1993). However, it also implies Chinese reformers do not have a dogmatic view on how to build a western style market economy. Unlike other post-socialist countries, such as Poland and Russia, Chinese reformers did not follow the 'Washington Consensus' religiously. There has been major progress along the path of marketization: with some exceptions, prices are now liberated and the ownership structure has been diversified. China's economy is basically open to the outside world following her 2001 entry into the World Trade Organization and her currency has also been drastically devalued over the last three decades.

However, the Communist Party has never been prepared to relinquish its complete control over the national economy. What distinguishes the China reform experience most from other market transition cases is the strong presence of a state sector. The state sector still provides more than 62 million urban jobs (15 per cent of urban employment) (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2017) and contributes to more than one third of the total value of industrial assets in the national economy (He 2016). The biggest enterprises in China today are mostly *yangqi*, centrally controlled state enterprises, and they remain as 'dragon heads' in key industrial sectors such as energy, finance and telecommunications. In sectors of strategic interest, state sector monopoly lingers. The state may no longer be the sole owner of these gigantic enterprises, as their ownership structure is mostly shareholder based and they are publicly listed, but the state remains the dominant shareholder in most cases. Through the mighty office of the State-owned

Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC), that in effect functions as the asset management company of the state, the party maintains its extensive control over the operation and key personnel appointments of these firms (Naughton 2015).

The statist tradition, however, is not confined to the significant contribution of the state sector to the national economy; it is also expressed in the state's approach to regulating the economy. Despite decades of market reforms, the logic of economic rationality does not prevail all the time. Instead, political concerns reign, particularly in times of crisis. This was the case in China's stock market crisis in 2015 and early 2016. Between May and August in 2015, there was major panic in the stock exchanges in Shenzhen and Shanghai. By late January 2016, there was around a 50 per cent drop in the share index level compared with the figures recorded in mid-2015. Like many regulators in the global economy, the Chinese government tried to address this free-fall with an injection of capital and hundreds of billions of yuan of public money were mobilized to purchase shares in Chinese enterprises. Extraordinary measures were taken, which were hardly compatible with the logic of the market. About a hundred central state-owned enterprises were asked by the SASAC to help stabilize the market situation by promising not to sell any shares during the crisis period. Also, in July 2015 the China Securities Regulatory Commission stipulated that shareholders with more than 5 per cent of shares in any listed company were forbidden to sell those assets within the following six months. The Minister of Security went further to warn that the 'hostile sale' of shares would be investigated and punishable (2015 nián zhōngguó gǔzāi n.d.). The market found these measures incomprehensible and they made no sense to investors who were perfectly rational in their wish to sell in view of the market slump. Nevertheless, for the Chinese state these anti-market moves were necessary and justified in the interests of the national economy. In short, despite decades of reforms and institutional changes, one can still readily identify aspects of economic operations that are not entirely congruent with the general principles of a capitalist order.

Scholars have attempted different approaches to capture the trajectory of urbanization in China. Studies on macro-economic structure (Yeh and Wu 1995; Yeh et al. 2015) identify four waves of urbanization since 1949. The first wave of pre-reform (1949–78) is characterized by internalization of market activities by the socialist state; the second wave of rural industrialization (1978–87) was a gradual externalization of the market whilst retaining continuous control over resources and factors of production by the state; the third wave (1988–2001) of urbanization was centred in land reform as well as the concomitant housing reform; the fourth wave (2001–present) has been characterized by the rise of producer services. Using the city of Shenzhen, which has always served as the laboratory to try various experiments that play at capitalism with communist pieces (Stark 2009), urban sociologists (O'Donnell et al. 2017) divide the past three decades of reform into three stages: experiments (1979–92), exceptions (1992–2004) and extensions (2004–present). The first section deals with institutional reforms unleashed by Deng through ideological separation of socialist governance and capitalist capital accumulation. The second section follows the zoning logic to explore exceptional rules, exceptional economies, and exceptional modalities of living in the urban area. More importantly, this section deals with the frictional interactions between the smooth and striate surfaces – that is, city and villages – and the gradation of licit and illicit, formal and informal, success and failure, and rural and urban (Bach 2010). The stage of extension explores failures or frustrations in situated action taken by local entrepreneurial states to advance their cities to the global platform.

Pragmatism, improvisation, and entrepreneurialism characterize the experiments situated in the conflicts of a planned national economy, a city and a multipolar global capitalism (He et al. 2018). Despite these different views, scholars concur with the shift of scholarship from state-market relations to state-society relations (He et al. 2017).

The unfinished process of marketization is further reinforced by the perseverance of socialist legacies in several key policy domains. Mobility of resources in particular is still hindered by various institutional parameters inherited from the Maoist era. Specifically, two essential resources are highly relevant to our current concern with urban development: land and labour. Market signals and profits do not fully dictate their flow. Instead, their movement has been truncated and compounded by administrative barriers and official categorizations that have been in effect since the early years of the People's Republic of China. Despite the fundamental change in the land management framework introduced in the mid-1980s allowing the transfer of land use rights, the pre-reform regime of state ownership of all urban land has remained intact. Local administrations, delegated with regulatory authority over land within their jurisdiction since the 1950s, are strongly motivated to maintain their grip as these resources guarantee revenues, GDP growth and credit supply in the reform era (Rithmire 2015). Similarly, although the effectiveness of *hukou* in regulating population movement has been undermined by the advent of marketization, it has remained relevant in the life of a Chinese citizen. The Chinese population has responded enthusiastically to income opportunities, but the discrepancy in living standards across the regions and the boundary between the rural and urban worlds have become fuzzy. Market supply of necessities makes the 'unsanctioned' movement of people more sustainable, and local experiments in accommodating temporary *hukou* movements are common. Yet people without local *hukou* are still vulnerable to expulsion and other forms of discrimination inflicted by local government, while individual life chances, such as access to better university education, continue to be determined by one's officially designated place of residence.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

Chinese cities in post-Mao years are thus representative of freedom and innovation on the one hand, but resistance and control on the other. One can find urban life enjoyable and pleasant, yet cannot lose sight of the tension and pressure inherent in the new order. Progress and affluence are entwined with inequality and injustice embedded in the jungle logic of survival of the fittest and in 'GDPism'. Behind the facade of comfort and convenience lies the concern of unsustainability and environmental degradation. Urban modernity is seen as the key to securing support and enhancing Party legitimacy, but it also unlocks a Pandora's box of protest, individuality and reflection. The processes of marketization and decentralization, after all, proceed within the context of the traditions of unshaken authoritarianism and state intervention. Urban development in post-Mao China is thus a story of contradictions and polemics.

This is a collective effort intending to capture the sophistication and complexities of the process of urban transformation in post-Mao China. No single book can fully capture the seismic changes of monumental proportions in Chinese cities over the last 40 years. Yet we are confident that this joint venture of scholars from diverse disciplinary

backgrounds – politics, sociology, human geography, cultural studies, anthropology and urban studies – will provide one of the most comprehensive analyses of this phenomenon. The book is organized along five different themes described below.

State Institutional Matters

The institutional setting defined by the state shapes the incentive and opportunity structure and affects the strategic calculations of all stakeholders. It delimits the scope of possibility for the unfolding of development and change. This is even more evident in the case of China. Lan Wang's chapter represents a painstaking effort to guide us through the maze of planning mechanism in China. It dissects the various levels of China's formal structure of urban planning: National People's Congress, State Council, local governments and legislatures at subnational levels, and functional departments and ministries. Together, they generate national and local laws and regulations as well as codes of practice that define standards, allocate resources and authority, and regulate all matters related to land use. Yet the system also entails the imposition of different types of plans. The urban master plan pictures the vision of the city in terms of its position at regional, national and transnational scales. The control plan, designed on the basis of master plan, sets out the detailed scheme for putting the directions into effect. The case of Shanghai is used to illustrate the functioning of the planning system. Not only does the discussion shed light on the aspirations of Shanghai as a global city, it also reflects on the new urban planning culture in the reform era that emphasizes the importance of urban-rural integration and the imperative of collaborative relationships among bureaucratic units.

Yuyang Liu's chapter on land-based finance addresses the central question raised by You-tien Hsing (2010) in her seminal work on the phenomenon of 'urbanization of the local state'. Local governments have been desperate to expand the urban boundary during the reform era and obtaining land is essential to the success of this developmental strategy. Why does it happen? Attributing the viability of this approach to the tax-sharing reform of 1994 and the revisions of the Land Management Law of the 1980s, Liu offers a detailed account of the mechanism of land acquisition and the ways land can contribute to local finances: direct income in the form of land-related taxes and fees, as collateral for credit and as leverage for shifting the burden of infrastructure investment to developers.

Nevertheless, urbanization does not only entail spatial development, it also involves human factors. Kam Wing Chan's account of the development of the *hukou* system over the last 60 years is indispensable to our understanding of urban change since 1949. It traces the genesis of the system to the 1950s when it was seen as an integral part of Mao's industrialization strategy. Together with the 'price scissor' – the unequal terms of exchange between agricultural and industrial goods – the *hukou* system facilitated full mobilization of rural resources for Mao's industrialization programme. Market reforms have loosened the control over population movement and urban China has witnessed an 'age of migration' unprecedented in human history. In keeping with China's status as the 'world's factory', businesspeople and factories across the country embrace cheap labour and talent from outside, with open arms. Local experiments to help accommodate the inflow of outside personnel are countless. However, although 'the physical rural-urban boundary has become permeable, the *hukou*-based rural-urban divide persists'. Chan argues that 'the reluctance to open up the *hukou* system in big cities, in terms of permitting

migrant workers to settle where they work, remains a major hurdle to substantive reforms'. In reality, contrary to general expectations, 'the door to the big cities is now more tightly shut for the ordinary migrant', and is still a huge stumbling block to progress that must be reformed, Chan expounds.

State Policy Shapes Development

State policy reflects the priorities and key concerns of the state and thus access to resources and support. Pu Hao tackles one of the most vital issues concerning urban development, that of housing policy. In Mao's China, home and work were connected as the allocation of housing was determined by one's administrative and occupational position, and was unevenly distributed across work units. The new ethos of enterprise reform and the rapidly rising urban population have, however, rendered the traditional approach of heavy reliance on public money for the provision of housing no longer tenable. Central to the policy change is the reduction of the state role in housing supply. Private house ownership is now legalized and China's urban housing has gradually been delinked from work and started to bear market value. Not only has housing become a commodity, but it has also emerged as an engine of growth for China's economy. Home ownership is now a common aspiration of the Chinese population, and real-estate speculation has also become a primary source of wealth accumulation for many.

With the ever-rising cost of housing, the capacity of the Chinese state to ensure a steady supply of affordable housing and thus succeed in helping the majority of people to realize the dream of being a home owner is a daunting task with major political implications. However, the increasing density of, and unremitting rise in, the urban population creates more than just problems of shelter and affordability. The relentless multiplication of human activities has also taken its toll on the urban environment. In their chapter, Bo Miao and Graeme Lang point to the importance of building a low-carbon society and a sustainable economy for the future of urban China. This is a challenge for all cities in the world, but as the source of about a quarter of the total greenhouse gas emitted globally, the urgency of the task is particularly acute for China. Achieving sustainability is, however, more easily said than done. In their meticulous account, which draws lessons from urban areas across the globe, Miao and Lang have set out a road map of the necessary measures and strategy on which Chinese cities must embark. In essence, the process must entail effective engagement among regulators, the market, the media and the general public. Unfortunately, this prospect does not look especially promising in the case of China. Here, development of civil society has been circumscribed and the media normally cannot conduct an open discussion without restriction. The independence and autonomy of scientists and experts is also compromised in many cases, and the participation of genuine grassroots NGOs is unfortunately limited and weak.

With the great diversity in terms of levels and patterns of development across the vast number of Chinese cities, each local jurisdiction is obliged to identify its own way of enhancing local resilience – the ability of the local community to address domestic environmental concerns by mobilizing local resources. That could be the key to attaining sustainability in the long run. However, the leaders of Chinese cities are preoccupied not only with the daunting tasks of overcoming adversity and negativity, but also mostly comprise ambitious and entrepreneurial politicians. Their primary concern is more about how, under their

guidance, to transform the cities into objects of national pride and global recognition, a task which does not need to be at odds with promoting environmental sustainability. Anne-Marie Broudehoux demonstrates this common trend among Chinese cities with a case study of Beijing on the eve of the Olympic Games in 2008. Production of the city's image took two forms: the tremendous effort made to reshape the city's built environment with iconic architectural monuments, and the brutal removal of the derelict and impoverished, as well as an ideologically loaded civilizing programme aimed at changing the city's human outlook. Aspiring to create a showcase of urban modernity justifying accelerated promotion to the top of the political hierarchy, local leaders tried to inject into the city a new form of aesthetics as a radical departure from the past and a new interpretation of patriotic ideals and civility, thus forming a model for the rest of the country to imitate.

The single-minded implementation of the 'reconstruction' project nevertheless reinforced the exclusionist and highly divisive worldviews so common among political entrepreneurs. The vision implies that cities are just for the winners and the deserving, and that losers should be disqualified and removed from public view. Inhumane as this may sound, the Chinese government has been enthusiastically promoting the development of mega-cities and city-regions as a strategy for accelerating urbanization and capital accumulation. Xu Zhang's chapter offers a comprehensive review of this specific approach to spatial development. The growth of city-regions spreading out over a large area and containing a number of cities more or less within commuting distance appears to be a global trend. According to Zhang, 'functionally, city-regions [with polycentric urban structure] have formed intensive socio-economic linkages, both within the region and beyond it, and have drawn "enormous economic strength from a new functional division of labour."' The post-Mao leadership is convinced with the validity of this approach, and spatial analyses of capital accumulation and concentration have revealed the materialization of eight *de facto* city-regions: Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, the Yangtze River Delta, the Pearl River Delta, Fujian province, Liaoning province, Hubei province, the Cheng-Yu Region and Shaanxi province. These regions are seen as strategic sites to fulfil state-orchestrated economic and social development targets. Nevertheless, whether this approach will exacerbate regional inequality, and how collaboration among Chinese cities can be maintained under this selective distribution of support and privileges, are issues that must be addressed by the current leadership.

Space for Private Pursuits and Individual Expression

To a certain extent, the retreat of the state inherent in the marketization process allows more space for individual expression. This would imply more than reconfiguration of the physical landscape of the cities, such as erection of spectacular buildings and iconic architecture. It is also about how space is utilized and consumed. State logic may not be the only legitimate and valid option anymore. Junxi Qian's chapter on public space in China is important for our understanding of the spatial changes in Chinese cities during the reform era. Qian contends that, while it is true that public space in China has always been susceptible to state rationales and the agendas of the political elites and used by the state to cultivate the citizenry, there are many ways to live and operate within the public space. Reflecting on the history of urban development in China, public space occasionally assumes the role of a grassroots agency, reflecting spontaneous expression from below. The mushrooming of teahouses in the early Republican era is an example of this.

In reform China, there are four socio-spatial processes taking place in Chinese cities with implications for the production and negotiation of public space: the spread of shopping malls, rampant gentrification, the rise of privately serviced gated communities, and the coercive regulation of the homeless, vagrants and beggars. In all these scenarios, both state agenda and private concerns are at stake and it is a process of negotiation and dialogue that defines the utilization of the space. The notion of an ideal separation between the state and society may not be really useful in deciphering the process of the co-production of meaning among all the actors concerned. Bart Wissink further elaborates on the implications of spatial reordering for middle class aspirations in his study of gated communities. In urban China today, there is a trend of enclave urbanism in which cities are transformed into a post-modern checkboard of socio-spatially bounded enclaves for selected groups or activities. The existing literature has been highly critical of the exclusive nature and negative social consequences of this phenomenon. Wissink challenges this literature as physically determinist – seeing urban enclaves as a universal condition. Instead, he argues that the formation of these gated communities is not based on a single factor and its social consequence varies with the specific characteristics of the assemblage of these enclaves. A relational comparative review, with attention to both similarities and differences between enclaves in different locales in urban China, and between China and the rest of the world, is the way forward for understanding enclave urbanism in China.

It is, however, important to recognize that the realignment of the spatial order can also nurture alternative lifestyles and orientation. Howard Chiang provides an overview of the rise of gay and lesbian culture in post-Mao urban China. The chapter argues that urban China has become an important venue for the political mobilization of homosexuals since the late 1970s and that rapid urbanization has greatly facilitated the proliferation of this process in two major ways. First, he argues that ‘the social density of cities provides sexual minorities an unusual level of resources to offer support, socialize, engage in debates, share information, organize activism, and manoeuvre the pressure of social norms with one another outside their natal family’. Second, Chiang claims that ‘the economic logic of market reform that has transformed the tempos and characteristics of Chinese society allow gay men and lesbians to work out a new notion of cultural citizenship governed by the intersections of gender, sexual orientation, class, and the working of state apparatuses in major metropolises’.

Similarly, June Wang and Li Chen trace the historical evolution of rock and roll music and its spatial politics in Chinese cities. Market reforms and the relaxation of state control of music have provided a fertile ground for the development of rock music in urban China. Its development is, however, an ongoing process of ‘reconfiguration of narratives, identities and territories’. The mobility of European-born subculture to China inspired Chinese rockers with the power of cultural resistance while, in the western part of China, putting Chinese rock on a non-stop journey seeking its own identity of Chineseness by assimilating vernacular musical elements. Spatially speaking, Chinese rockers have been struggling with political and market forces for performance venues. Moving between private houses, live venues and music festivals, their survival hinges upon the changing perception of the value of rock music by a newly formed coalition of cultural, economic and political elites. They can be castigated as ‘politically threatening’ under certain circumstances, but can be embraced as an instrument for ‘city-branding’ given a different political mood.

Tai-lok Lui and Shuo Liu conclude this section with an insightful analysis of the rise of the urban middle class in China. The emergence of this new social class confirms the impact of marketization and the rise of a non-state alternative for social advancement. Many experts optimistically view this new social class as an agent of social and political change. Lui and Liu disagree. Based on their survey findings, they argue that anxiety is always a prominent feature of the cultural and political outlook of China's middle class despite their growing affluence. The new urban middle class appear to be uneasy with the notion of class, as socialist China is supposed to be a classless society. They are also conservative in politics as, unlike their western counterparts, a significant proportion of the Chinese middle class belongs to the *tizhi* – the establishment. They are either state employees or major beneficiaries of connections with senior officials or of policy changes. When confronted with adversity or personal misfortune, they usually prefer individual effort to collective action. In most cases, market consumption is the dominant strategy for solving their own problems. For those who conclude that life in China is unbearable, politics is still not seen as the answer; instead, emigration is a more common option.

Rural and Urban Exchanges Redefined

Interflow of resources across the rural-urban boundary is now more expedient and the influx of labour into the cities has reached unprecedented levels in the reform era. The massive inflow of cheap labour from the countryside has helped sustain industrialization and urban development, yet it has also led to a drastic increase in housing demand in China. The magnitude of the shortage in supply is translated into the rise of the 'urban village' (*cheng zhong cun*). Jing Li and Li Tao offer a comprehensive historical review of its precipitous development and dissect the institutional roots of its emergence. For them, the urban village is not just the common choice of migrant workers due to its relatively low cost and good location, it is also a result of the aggressive expansion of Chinese cities. Most peasants have lost their farmland in the process. Either as a way to supplement their income or as a tactic to maximize the built on area, which may earn the household more compensation from future coercive acquisition, peasants are highly motivated to rebuild their houses for rental purposes. By exploring the ambiguity in the property rights regime and its legal loopholes, the urban village is thus a collective strategy for Chinese peasants to respond to the threat of urban expansion.

Nevertheless, despite their huge contribution to the maintaining the low cost of urban production, local officials mostly see such enclaves with suspicion and uneasiness. They are regarded as havens of crime and chaos, and, in short, a threat to social order. Karita Kan and Rebecca W. Y. Wong's account of the surveillance and monitoring of urban villages is most illustrative of the general scepticism of local governments towards these communities. According to Kan and Wong's analysis, there has been systematic application of discrete and targeted practices to control these high-risk communities of high mobility and low social cohesion. 'Community-style management' (*shequhua guanli*) has been stressed as the guiding principle for maintaining social order in these neighbourhoods. This entails the strengthening of grassroots institutions, collaboration with newly created stability maintenance centres (*weiwen zhongxin*) and local authorities, and the deployment of advanced surveillance technology. The common approach of gating thus reflects vividly the general hostility of local officialdom.

Edmund W. Cheng continues the discussion from an alternative perspective. In his analysis he argues that, while state control in these neighbourhoods is evident, these communities have somehow managed to secure a semi-autonomous domain with a wide array of strategies for negotiating with the local authority. In short, the role of intermediary agencies in providing public goods, maintaining social order and building patronage have earned the local community space from total subordination. However, the interflow of resources across the rural-urban boundary is not a one-way influx of migrant workers to the cities; urban administrations have also intruded into rural China in the scramble for land. Land grabs through the coercive process of acquisition have been the dominant form deployed by local government to take farmland away from the peasants. It is highly contentious and in many cases has ended in violent confrontation.

Ray Yep's chapter sheds light on a new experimental approach in Chongqing, the land bill system (*dipiao*). In essence, the new practice allows the exchange of developmental rights for a construction project across the rural-urban boundary. Central to the arrangement is the relocation of peasants into modern high-rise buildings, as evacuation from their rural residence is key to creating a quota of development rights. The process appears to be more transparent, with details of transactions announced publicly and, most importantly, the affected peasants being compensated under a better deal compared with the conventional practice of land acquisition. Yep nevertheless warns us about the possible cost of this practice in the long run. Ying Wu further evaluates the negative consequences of this process in her analysis. Many villages are reorganized as a community (*qu*) in the process, but the integration of several villages into one single neighbourhood can be complicated. It may imply confusion as to authority, as the old and new administrative regimes may coexist. More importantly, entitlement to collective assets attached to the membership of the original village may prove to be a tenacious obstacle to social cohesion in the new community.

Challenges to Urban Governance

Life may be more comfortable and convenient for a significant portion of the urban population, but there are always social segments who feel aggrieved by the dislocation and damage caused by the rapid social and economic changes inherent in the urbanization process. Their growing resourcefulness and the retreat of the state have greatly facilitated political mobilization and collective action. Industrial conflict is one of the major sources of urban contention. Xuehui Yang and Feng Chen uncover the various strategies of local governments in handling labour disputes. Their account demonstrates that the record of labour law enforcement has been poor in urban China, with local government tending to see implementation of these laws as an impediment to capital accumulation and economic growth. Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable. Nevertheless, there are three major mechanisms for conflict resolution: repression, mediation and collective bargaining, and these patterns appear to constitute a continuum along which state power can be classified from strong to weak. Concessions from the employers are rare, although not impossible. Urban workers, however, continue to be denied the right to organize, and justice is unfortunately hardly a priority of local government in managing industrial relationships. Growing labour militancy in China is thus a very genuine possibility in the years to come.

Thomas Johnson, on the other hand, concentrates his inquiry on another vile consequence of rapid urbanization: environmental degradation. Beginning with a case study

of the protest against the construction of a large-scale paraxylene plant in Xiamen in 2007, the chapter identifies several characteristics of urban protests during the reform era. The population density and concentration of affluent residents in an urban setting tend to offer protesters ample political, social and financial resources with which to sustain contention in a way other communities may not be able to. The fact that many of these protesters are middle class in background also renders the local government's strategy of buying off complaints with compensation a more expensive, and thus a not so tenable, option. These better-educated and more resourceful protesters also exhibit high expectations with regard to the competency of the local state. They are, in short, demanding a new pattern of dialogue between the state and society. As a response, in most cases, the socialist state does not deliver institutional changes that allow more room for participation and representation. This does not mean it is indifferent to the challenges to governance. Instead, the Chinese state responds to these concerns triggered by rapid urbanization in two major ways: provision of public goods and community building.

Daniel R. Hammond traces the evolution of the scheme of urban social assistance as a means to ensure against poverty in Chinese cities and uphold social stability. Despite its many local variations, the minimum livelihood guarantee scheme (*dibao*) has become the major form of income support for urban residents across China. By late 2016, more than 15 million Chinese citizens were included in the scheme. Notwithstanding its fundamental purpose of offering some kind of safety net for the unfortunate, adjustments and changes have to be made in accommodating other top policy priorities defined by the party state; for example, state sector reform, the anti-corruption drive, as well as healthcare and housing reforms. A more important response to the challenge to urban governance is the revamping of the grassroots management structure. Thomas Heberer's chapter provides insights into local government's response to the decline of *danwei* (the work unit system) in regulating individual lives and the changing economic outlook of urban residents resulting from the intensified effort of community building. *shequ jianshe* in the reform era is, however, quite different from that of Mao's years. Communities today are no longer just people's homes but may also comprise business, agencies and schools in the neighbourhood. Central to this community building is the promotion of a residents' committee, an autonomous body entrusted with multiple tasks, including service delivery, security management and the mobilization of volunteers. Whereas these are no easy tasks to achieve, the situation is further compounded by the rise of the home-owners' committee, which is also present in the same geographical space.

One strategy to strengthen the position of the residents' committee is the promotion of the democratic character of this institution. Elections are the answer. Bing Guan and Yongshun Cai's account elaborates how local government has intended enhancing the legitimacy of residents' committees in recent years. Despite the strong presence of the state in these elections and the general management of these committees, the local community appears enthusiastic about participating in these local bodies. Home-owners are particularly motivated. The symbiotic relationship between the more autonomous home-owners' committee and the state-sponsored residents' committee attests to the contentions as well as negotiations between the state and society in urban China today.

Lastly, the state's effort to strengthen local management is not confined to hardware building; it also entails state support for a new form of public service: community social

work service. Mun Young Cho argues that this service offers potential leverage for enhancing the general quality of community governance in several major ways: fulfilling common recognition, promoting mutual assistance and encouraging participation. Development of the social work profession is now accepted as part of the state project of ‘social construction’ (*shehui jianshe*) in tandem with the orientation towards a ‘harmonious society’. Nevertheless, despite the steady increase in the state budget and rising provision of social work service at the grassroots level, the contribution of this profession has been hindered by the party-state’s uneasiness with the prospect of rising social autonomy and spontaneity and the potential threat of rights-based community activism unleashed by expansion of the social work service. The jury is still out on the effect of social work in mitigating social conflicts and urban crises in twenty-first-century China.

NOTE

1. Chinese cities are given a ranking, from Tier 1 (highest) to Tier 4 (lowest), based on a score deriving from factors such as size of the economy, population, and their position in the administrative hierarchy.

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