Revisiting the Form of Chinese Traditional Capital Cities

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A widely accepted assumption concerning the form of Chinese traditional cities is that they are derived from Confucian Cosmology and Fengshui theory, thus making them full of myth and symbolism. In this paper, we attempt to build three arguments based on political economic perspectives. Firstly, borrowing Kevin Lynch's definitions (1981), we argue that the ideal form of Chinese traditional cities is a mechanical, functional model rather than a magical one. Secondly, by examining historical maps of various capital cities, we suggest that the form-evolution as well as distribution of Chinese cities can be better classified according to the relationship between the tributary mode of production (TMP) and the petty capitalist mode of production (PCMP). Thirdly, we argue that it is possible to use our classification and analysis to examine the form of current Chinese cities as the nature of the Chinese political economy remains relatively unchanged.

We have succeeded at identifying a dynamic consistent pattern of change in Chinese city form over history as the interaction between TMP and PCMP. Social and physical forms are the result of a polarized society and an uncompleted public sphere interface between the state and the citizenry, with a consequent inequality in urban development in modern times.

Keywords: Chinese capital cities, Chinese city forms, traditional planning and design, Chinese political economy.

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Introduction

Concerning the form of Chinese pre-modern cities, a widely accepted assumption is that the Chinese city form was derived from a universal city model originating three thousand years ago which reflects ancient Chinese Cosmology (Wheatley, 1971, Wright, 1965, Golany, 2001). In fact, many historical records including maps and texts also confirm the existence of this universal square form and a distinct street layout as characteristics of many Cities. However, in second half of the last century, archaeological evidence based on fieldwork has shown that there is a relatively big gap between what was drawn and written, and what was actually built. Scholars such as Nancy Steinhardt (1990), Piper Gaubatz (1996) and Yinong Xu (2000) suggested that geographical and defence factors are the two main reasons for this gap. To be more precise, the cities in Northern China such as Xian and Beijing are closer to the ideal form as the land there is flat. In contrast, cities in Southern China such as Hangzhou, Guangzhou and Suzhou often have irregular street networks and an organic form due to the presence of more mountains and rivers. Existing literature concerning the form and distribution as well as classification of Chinese cities has shared three assumptions that: (1) There is an universal form of the Chinese walled city which reflects Chinese cosmology; (2) The actual form of Chinese cities might be different from the ideal model primarily due to geographical factors; and (3) A simple classification of Northern and Southern cities is possible based on their shape.

While we believe that geographical factors might play a significant role in making the form of city, human interactions and human economic activities are the main drivers behind the form of any city with a long history. The Chinese political economy produced a consistent pattern of the Tributary Mode of Production and Petty Capitalist Mode of Production over at least thousand years (Hill Gates 1997), and here we have attempted to study the evolution of Chinese city form as the interaction between these two economic forces, or in Geertman's words (2007), we comprehend Chinese city form as the result of an interwoven process between a "state-sponsored" and a "spontaneous" urbanism.

In this paper, we firstly review existing literature concerning the form and ideology of traditional cities in China. This will serve as the background for our three arguments:

1. Although the ideal city form of Chinese capital cities reflects to a certain extent the Chinese cosmic diagram, the reason for the longevity of the magical city model in China compared with other civilizations is that this ideal form is in fact a functional model, being an exploitation machine of the state.
2. In fact, the application of the actual form of Chinese capital cities goes beyond the ideal form, given the actual form is the production of the interwoven process between the state-sponsored and a spontaneous, informal mode of urbanism.
3. As the nature of the Chinese political economy remains almost consistent, it is possible to trace a consistent pattern in Chinese urban form over history.

Finally, we will demonstrate our arguments with emergent urban forms in modern China: the self-sufficient work-unit compound versus the slum neighbourhood in the Maoist era and the CBD and Gated Community versus the urban villages in the reformed period from 1978 onwards.

The ideal form of the Chinese city: magical or mechanical?

Existing literature asserts the existence of a universal city form in China, however, this “universal city form” is identified in this paper as the “ideal” as opposed to the actual form. This section firstly describes how this ideal form might be derived from Chinese cosmology. Secondly, we attempt to build our first argument that this ideal form is in fact a functional model or a mechanical tool of the state.

Description of the ideal form of Chinese traditional City

The description of the ideal form of Chinese capital cities was found in a historical record called the book of rites, chapter Kaogongji, dating back to the Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BC). It reads:

> *"The city is of nine li in square perimeter with three gates on each side, each gate opening to a broad avenue divided into three parallel ways, of which the middle one is for vehicles, the left for male pedestrians, and the right for female pedestrians, thus forming a square lattice within nine ways running from north to south and another nine from east to west. In the center of the city stands the imperial palace with the ancestral temple of the imperial family on its left and the She, or the Altar of the Earth on its right. In front of the palace but still within the forbidden walls is the imperial court while behind the Forbidden City lies the market".*

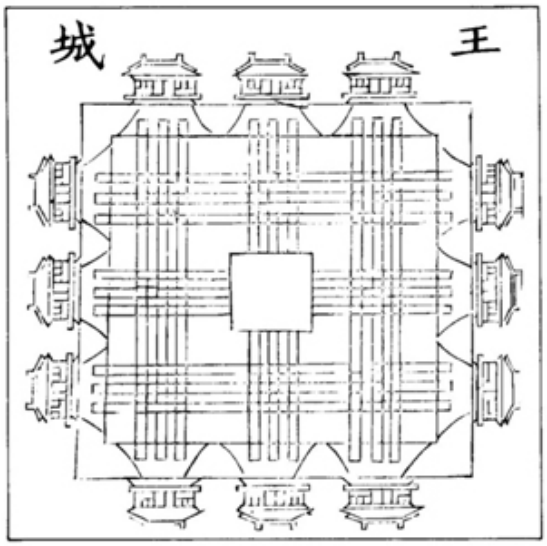

Figure 1: Wangcheng in Sanlitu Jizhu part 1, vol. 4.

In the second half of the 20th century, scholars from historical, anthropological and architectural disciplines have investigated the meaning behind the text and how it was applied in reality. Firstly, it is widely accepted that this description must be derived from ancient Chinese cosmology which sees the human world as a square with the Emperor at its centre (Needham, 1962, Wright, 1977). As the Son of Heaven, the Emperor is the one who connects people with the universe, and who can bring

prosperity to the human world by inserting cosmic order into his physical city and social realm. Paul Wheatley (1971) even suggests that the street layout in this ideal city must be related to hexagrams in the I-Ching or The Book of Changes. In addition, according to Chinese belief, the walls and gates play a very important role. For example, the walls help to keep the universal energy (the Qi in Chinese) inside individual houses, palaces or the whole city (Feuchtwang, 1974). In contrast, the gates are the place where this universal energy might enter or escape the built entities, thus their locations were carefully advised by a Fengshui master (Feuchtwang, 1974, Xu, 2000). Concerning this religious aspect of this ideal form, Piper Gaubatz, in her study of Chinese capital cities, has concluded:

> *"The entire plan of the city, down to the level of individual quarters, is laid out with great attention to geomancy, numerology and the benefit of harmonizing human settlement with the natural and spiritual worlds"* (Gaubatz, 1996).

However, no actual city can be found to be hundred per cent identical to the ideal model. The application of this ideal city model varies largely from region to region (Steinhardt, 1990, Mote, 1977).

Differences aside, according to Chin Pai (Pai, 1987), following physical characteristics can be found in most capital cities:

1. All cities were enclosed by walls and were mostly square or rectangular in shape.
2. Cities have a checkerboard street network running NS and EW.
3. The city and the principal official buildings were oriented towards the cardinal directions with special emphasis on the north-south axis.
4. A zoning system of specialised walled districts was developed in accordance with the Chinese principle of social segregation (dividing the society into four classes with the official-scholars as the highest and the merchants as the lowest class).

Kevin Lynch suggests this "magical" city model was the very first type of city which can be found in many other ancient civilizations (Lynch, 1981). However, the longevity of the Chinese model still requires a comprehensive explanation. Arthur Wright suggests that the reason for this longevity "was the cumulative weight of history" in China. Confucian education has made "historical precedent" for the Chinese "something of the power of law and logic for Westerners". Hence, he claims the increasing weight of cumulative history rather than innovation that can be found in architecture, city planning or other fields (Wright 1987).

To a certain extent, Wright's explanation for the longevity of the Chinese magical city model might be right. However, from a political and economic perspective, we will argue that the main reason for the longevity of Chinese magical city model derives from its hidden functional principles. This will be discussed next.

The functional aspect of Chinese ideal form of city

In *The Good Form of City* Kevin Lynch classifies three types of city form; the magical, the machine and the organic city model (Lynch 1981). Based on existing literature, Lynch claims Chinese capital cities are good examples of the magical city model. However, we argue that the Chinese ideal city

form more resembles a machine or a functional city model than a magical one. Our argument will be based on two pillars: firstly, the study of the "Shi" concept in ancient Chinese political philosophy and secondly, a political economic analysis by Hill Gates (Gates, 1996).

In ancient Chinese political philosophy, there is a concept called "Shi" (势) believed to be inherent in traditional Chinese warfare, politics, literature, calligraphy, painting and architecture. The ideogram of the "shi" was explained by Francois Jullien, a French sinologist, as follows:

> *"The term shi is the same as he word yi, which is believed to represent a hand holding something, a symbol of power to which the diacritic radical for force or li was later added. Xu Shen thinks that what is held in the hand is a clod of earth, which could symbolize something put in position or a positioning"* (Jullien, 1995)

In his book, *The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China*, about the concept of "shi", Jullien defines "shi" as the notion of power born out of disposition. Qi Zhu, in a study of the impact of the concept Shi in architecture, also reviews a variety of interpretations by different philosophical schools of thought during the Warring State Period. For instance, Sun Zi, suggests a shi is manifested as a clever combat disposition used in warfare to gain an advantage over one's opponent. From the legalist school, Shen Dao and Han Fei define a shi as the controlling power inherent in political hierarchies, while Xun Zi, a Confucian philosopher, believes that authoritative ritual power (shi) is an effective and determining strength that stems from ritual dispositions (Zhu, 2008).

Applying the concept of Shi to urban planning and architecture, the Chinese ancient elite seek to gain advantage (automatically) from a certain (natural or artificial) spatial configurations. The ideal form of the Chinese city is hence built in a way, so that the Emperor at the centre automatically gains an absolute power over the mass. Zhu Jianfei (Zhu, 2004) compared the spatial configuration of the Chinese ideal city with the Panopticon designed by Jeremy Bentham. The Emperor in this way has an absolute visual power. In his walled palace, he can see anyone, while remaining invisible to the outside.

The second pillar which supports our view of a Chinese ideal city form as a functional model is that the primary functional principles behind this model are derived from the state-managed tributary mode of production (TMP), the primary economy of the walled capital cities. Hill Gates, an American anthropologist and historian, describes it as an exploitation mechanism which "for a thousand years…has transferred surpluses from various producer classes (peasants, petty capitalists, laborers)" to the ruling class "by means of direct extraction" in the form of "tributes, taxes, hereditary labor duties, and the like" (Hill Gates 1997). This mode of production is comparable to those in ancient Rome or India, thus ancient Rome and traditional Chinese cities share a common feature of the checkerboard street layout which seeks for efficacy in circulation and defensive function. Chinese capital cities are differentiated from those in ancient Rome only in that they are the home of only the ruling class, excluding all the commoners. In order to do so, Chinese city planners used the wall intensively as a separation tool which not only keeps the commoners outside the city, but also keeps different groups of people inside in different isolated districts. Thus, the ideal form of Chinese capital cities resembles an ancient Roman military camp more than the Roman cities

themselves. The Chinese walled city is more functional than even the Roman machine city model from which cities in some Western countries derive.

From observing the pragmatism of the Chinese regime over the last century, in which the Chinese state has changed its belief and ideology several times, we are convinced that the idea of the existence of a religious, mythical city model in China for over two thousand years is questionable. We argue for the longevity of Chinese ideal city form for the reason that it is primarily a functional model rather than a magical one.

The form of Chinese actual Cities: Commercial Zones versus Walled City

The ideal city form is often mistaken as the actual universal form of all Chinese cities. In fact, it represents just half of what made Chinese capital cities. The second half of Chinese capital cities, which were largely neglected in or are absent from many historical records, are the commercial zones outside the city walls. This is a densely populated area characterized by irregular street patterns and narrow alleys. This section will discuss this neglected part and its role in the evolution of Chinese city form.

The commercial zones outside city walls

We define the actual form of Chinese capital cities as consisting not only of the walled territory but also territories outside city walls which often clustered by city gates. The outer part was in fact home for the commoners which might count for at least 75% of total population (Schinz, 1996). Alfred Schinz, a German geographer, in contrast to many others who suggest capital cities serve merely administrative functions, has observed a commercial part attached to many of them. These commercial zones are characterized by a much more dense built form, organic and irregular street patterns and a vivid colorful lifestyle occurring until late at night.

Some historians argue that the organic shape and irregular street patterns are due to geographical factors (Eisenstadt and Shachar, 1987, Mote, 1977). However, the study of the morphology of European medieval cities has suggested informal economic activities can also generate organic street patterns. Economic activities such as trading tend to generate the shortest routes from everywhere to the market place. In the European context, where the market is often found at the centre of the city, this tendency will optimize the form of the city as a circle (Hiller, 1996).

In China, because the location for the market was close to the city gates or a major route connecting city gates to the river, common people will be clustered around these two elements, creating an organic shape and irregular street patterns. We believe the mechanism of the informal petty-capitalist economy has produced the organic and irregular form rather than geographical factors.

In addition, there is also an interesting spatial characteristic which makes commercial zones in China different from European cities. For instance, this zone is clustered into different groups based on lineage, kinship, gender or professional associations. As a result, for example, a group from Zhejiang will build their own school, library, temple and welfare system for only Zhejiang people to use. The organization and function of this commercial zone might reflect the early form of civil society elsewhere, at least in the late dynasties (Rowe, 1992). However, a civil society has never come into existence due the ability of the state to bring old orders back to society at any time.

Figure 2: Xiguan, commercial zone in Guangzhou city, Qing dynasty (Source Guangzhou Municipal archives).

The evolution of Chinese capital city form

The previous sections have identified two substantial characteristics of Chinese capital cities. By examining historical maps of major cities, we suggest the evolution of the actual form of Chinese cities can be described in four steps as follows:

- Step 1: The foundations of most walled cities before the Tang dynasty are characterized by building the city wall and constructing important buildings. This period is relatively short. It is worth mentioning that the number of Chinese cities has remained mostly unchanged since the last imperial period (Skinner 1977).
- Step 2: Serving as stimuli, walled cities attract traders (the petty capitalists) and labourers from the hinterland, settling in commercial zones outside the walled cities. This process might take more than a century.
- Step 3: The petty-capitalist mode of production evolves, giving rise to a mature civil society. In turn, this threatens the stability of the state's hierarchical system. In response, that state who best understands the relation between merchant class and the rise of a civil society, knows exactly what to do to bring the society back to its ancient order. In the name of protecting the common people from pirates or the need for a larger city, the state will extend the old city wall to include this commercial zone. In fact, after becoming walled, the majority of labourers will lose their home as they are not allowed to live inside the walled city. The business of the petty capitalists will decline. Many buildings within the old commercial zone will be converted to state property.

- Step 4: Once, the commercial zones become walled, a larger walled city is completed, and the same process from step one to step three will repeat over and over again. For example, the city of Guangzhou underwent this process four times.

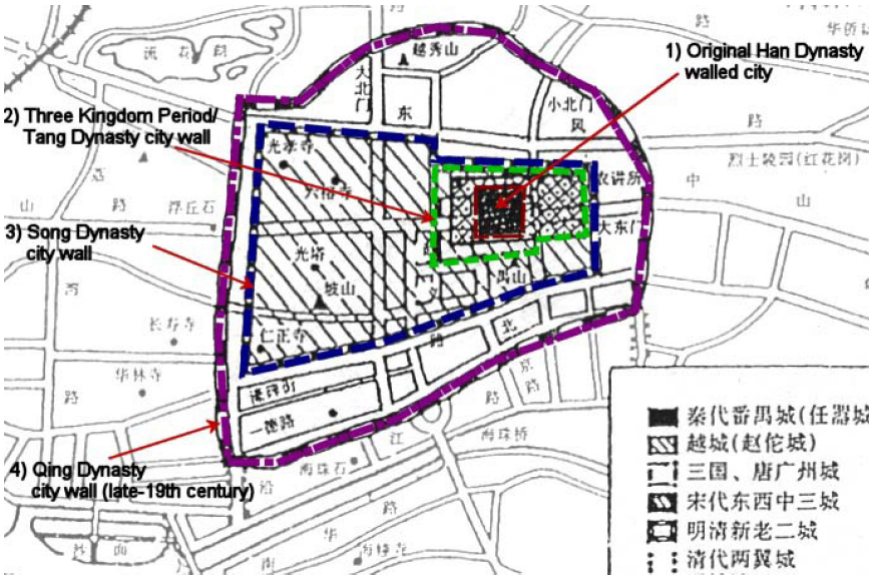

Figure 3: Diagram showing the successive expansion of City Guangzhou (Source City council Guangzhou 1999).

However, there is a crucial problem which leads to the density of this commercial area because Chinese capital cities are often sited closer to a river bank according to fengshui theory and commercial zones prefer to locate between the river and the walled city for transportation efficiency. As a result of this configuration, there is not enough land to extend the cities towards the river. Thus, the built forms of commercial zones were differentiated from the walled areas. Not only was the density in this area much higher, but also new building typologies emerged. For instance, the shop house typology was created from the courtyard house type, and multi-storey houses were constructed in contrast to a landscape of one storey courtyard houses in the walled city. There was a lack of open spaces in general, so the streets were very narrow. In Guangzhou, those small alleys are often less than one metre (Schinz, 1989).

Having walled the commercial zones, the Chinese state often attempted to extend the existing rectangular street network into the commercial zone. However, large parts of commercial areas remains irregular and organic in shape today.

Distribution and classification of Chinese capital city forms

The existing literature about Chinese traditional urban planning offers at least two ways of comprehending how Chinese cities are distributed over a vast country. William Skinner, an American prominent geographer, divided China into nine physiogeographic provinces based on the quality of soil for the production of agriculture. Skinner then applied the Central Place Theory developed by Walter Christaller, to suggest the logic underneath the network of Chinese cities (Skinner, 1977a).

This approachis more sophisticated than the simple division of Chinese cities into those administratively-oriented in the North versus those commercially-oriented in the South (Wright, 1965). Recently, Hill Gates criticized Skinner's view of Chinese capital cities as administrative centers per se. In addition, she suggested the Central Place Theory of Christaller, which is suitable for a natural capitalist economy in Germany, overlooks the nature of the Chinese economy as a combination between The Tributary State-Managed Mode of Production (TMP) and The Petty Capitalist Mode of Production (PCMP) (Gates 1996). Hence, Hill Gates offers a new method for comprehending the distribution Chinese cities based on the interrelationship between these two economic forces as follows:

	strong	**TMP**	*weak*
Strong	TMP/PCMP *strong/strong* Lower and middle Yangzi, Pearl River delta		TMP/PCMP *weak/strong* Southeast coast (Fujian), Taiwan
PCMP	TMP/PCMP *Strong/weak* North China Plain, Chengdu Basin		TMP/PCMP Weak/weak Southeast to Northwest interior crescent
Weak			

Figure 4: TMP/PCMP and Regional Distribution (Source: Hill Gates, 1996).

In previous sections we have identified the impact of the TMP and PCMP on the actual city form respectively; here we find the potential to use Gates' analysis for a new classification of Chinese cities. In this way, form will be classified according the political and economic functions of the city.

For example, Cities in the North China plain and the Chengdu Basin (Beijing, Xi'an or Chengdu) have a strong TMP and weak PCMP which implies the square shape ideal city form is preserved relatively well. In contrast, cities on the Southeast coast or in Taiwan (for Quanzhou or Fuzhou) have a weak TMP and a strong PCMP which means an organic and irregular shape will be the dominant pattern.

In two other groups of regions whose TMP/PCMP is either strong/strong or weak/weak, it is difficult to find a correlation between form and economic function. However, cities under these two conditions are easily classified according to their physical or population size. Although both groups of cities have irregular form, cities in Pearl River Delta and Yangtze Delta regions are much larger not only in physical size but also in population. In contrast, those in Southeast to Northeast crescent (weak/weak) are relatively small and play no important role politically and economically.

The forms of 30[1] major cities from 4 political-economic regions are examined to test the validity of this classification. The results suggest that Hill Gates' theory is not only an effective tool for

comprehending the distribution but also for classifing the city forms. Natural factors of course also play an important role in the making of city form, especially in the case of small cities with no economic and political significance. However, we believe, in these densely populated cities, economic activities and human interaction should be considered as the primary driving force in shaping the physical form of city.

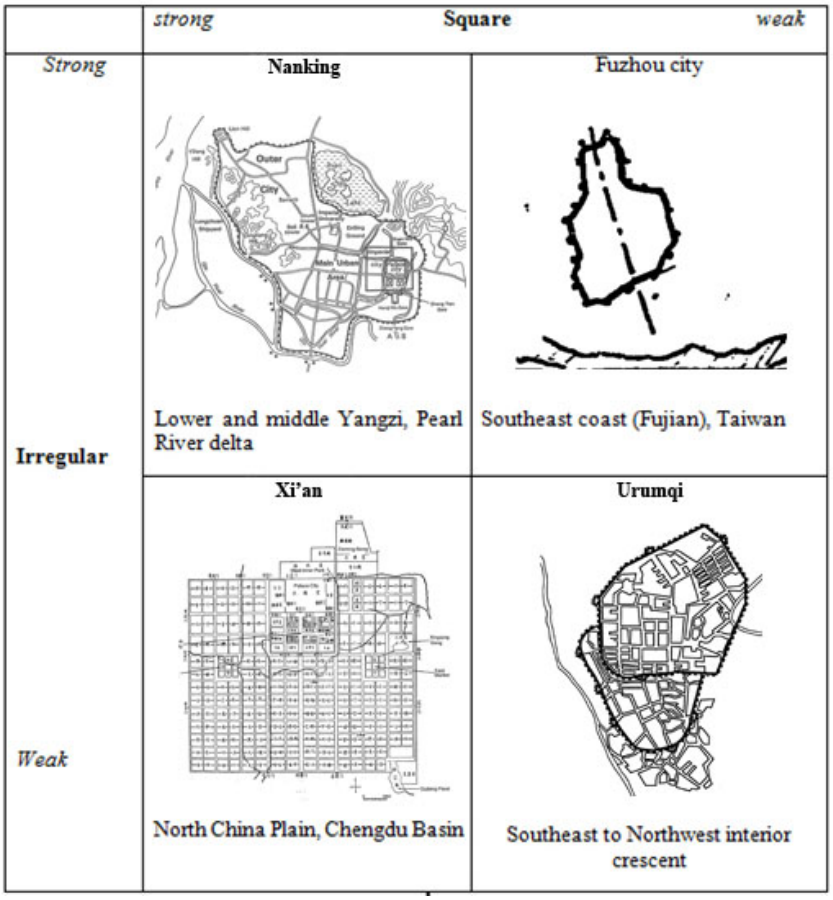

Figure 5: Classification of City Form according to TMP/PCMP.

In the two sections above, we attempted to build two general arguments. Firstly, we argue that the ideal form or cosmic model of Chinese cities follows a functional, machine city model rather than a magical one. Secondly, we argue the organic, irregular shape of the actual form of Chinese traditional cities is a function of commercial activities rather than of geographical factors. We then have tried to use Hill Gate's political economic analysis to identity the evolutional pattern as well as the distribution of four form-types of Chinese cities.

The next section will apply our theory to the reading of modern Chinese cities.

The form of Chinese modern cities: The remains of a distinctive pattern

There are divided opinions concerning current Chinese urban development. While a large group of scholars believe that Chinese cities were gradually westernized under the impact of globalization (Marshall, 2004, Ren, 2011), a small group suggest that Chinese urbanism is still distinct (Friedmann, 2005, Hassenpflug, 2010). Indeed, if justification is merely based on the general impression of the physical form of Chinese modern cities characterized by glass-steel office towers and wide roads filled by cars, then Shanghai, Beijing or Wuhan are not very different from New York or London. On the other hand, by identifying features which have survived from ancient times and still play an important role in shaping Chinese urban form, such as the Wall, south-north orientation of buildings and a certain degree of symbolism, some might argue for the longevity of Chinese ancient planning (Benjamin, 2006).

From a political economic perspective, we argue the dual track in economics of TMP and PCMP which results in the co-existence of a state-sponsored and a spontaneous mode of urbanism, is in fact a macro unchanged pattern of development over time. The interaction and co-existence of the two modes of urbanism, in turn, will generate distinctive physical patterns in Chinese modern cities.

We will attempt to support our argument by depicting built forms generated by each mode of urbanism in the Maoist and reformed periods in following sections.

Mao's era 1949-1978: Work-Unit Compounds versus Slum Neighborhoods

In the Maoist era, state-sponsored urbanism was characterized by the construction of 'work-unit compounds' as new centers of Chinese cities, while those spaces between the newly inserted work-unit compounds observed a 30 year process of slum development given the constraints imposed on spontaneous urbanism.

Work-unit Compounds

In the period from 1949 to 1978 called the Maoist era, state-led urbanism was dominant in China. Under the new socialist ideology, cities were no longer understood as consumption entities but places of production, and the emphasis was put on rapid industrialization. Thus, a new urban form, the work-unit compound or danwei was inserted into many cities.

The typology of Danwei is derived from Soviet model "with their characteristic three-to five stories rectangular buildings often stretched for mile" (Gaubatz, 1999). Beside a factory, work place, located at the center of each danwei, there are also educational and recreational facilities including food distribution within those walled compounds. So, basically the life of Chinese citizens could be conducted within the danwei without having contact with the outside, which virtually eliminated the need to improve basic infrastructure for the city as a whole.

In many respects, the new work-unit compounds resemble the old ideal form of Chinese capital cities. Firstly, it is the idea of creating a universal built form. Secondly, although this universal built form might be the heart of the city, a large proportion of the population remained excluded and neglected. In the case of pre-modern China, the neglected areas were the commercial zones outside

the city walls, while in the communist era they were the spaces between the newly inserted work-unit compounds, called “slum neighbourhoods”.

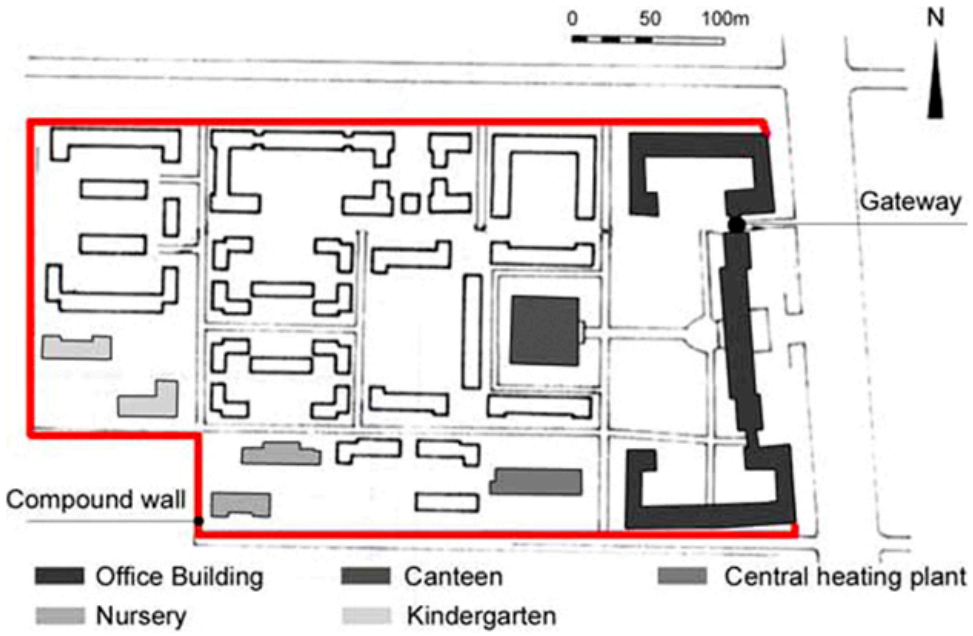

Figure 6: Typical Layout of a Work-Unit Compound.

Slum Neighbourhoods

In general, because of the absence of a free market and the abandonment of any economic and construction activities conducted by individuals, the landscape between work-unit compounds remained functionally ‘flat’ without any differentiation. In addition, in East Asian countries, where the lifespan of houses on average is very short, for example in Japan, it is about 30 years, banning construction activities by individuals and providing no alternative leads to a long process of decay for old historical city cores. Nevertheless, the need for greater living space given the increase in population led people to expand their homes illegally, encroaching on the shared courtyard and the neighbourhood alleys.

Another interesting aspect observed in this period was the ‘insularization’ of those decaying neighbourhoods in order to protect their scarce public facilities from outsiders. This reminds us of the old commercial zones where different groups based on kinship and lineage of association also tended to cluster themselves in the absence of public governance.

Reformed era from 1978 onwards: CBD and Gated Communities versus Urban Villages

If the socialist cities might remind us of Chinese walled cities before the Song dynasty (960-1279) where commercial activities was banned, and the TMP was the only economy of the city, then the emerging cities in the reformed era resemble those in late dynasties with the rise of the PMCP. It is

worth noting that Chinese state ideology has changed again within a short period of time, this time reforming the TMP to become almost identical to a capitalist mode of production, similar to the old dynastic economy. This 'capitalist' part plays an important role in transforming the physical city, because for the first time in history, a free market has become the centre of the city.

Central Business District and Gated Communities

Learning from the Central Business District of the advanced capitalist city model, the Chinese state has replaced many old parts of historical cities with office towers to accommodate international companies. To accommodate a small group of people who get rich quickly, many gated communities have developed on the outskirts of cities. The land use pattern of the old socialist city has been radically reconstructed to meet the requirements of a capitalist economy.

As work and housing have become separated into different districts, and millions of migrants have arrived, traffic has become a major problem in many Chinese cities, especially as many people can now afford a car. The impact of the car invasion as well as the dictation of traffic engineering in urban planning and design in China looks at the first glance similar to elsewhere. However, there is a significant difference, which is to a great extent the heritage of Chinese imperial planning and thinking.

Looking at historical maps of Beijing, Xi'an or other major cities in China, one finds that the main road network often divided the city core into street blocks with huge dimensions, for example the Beijing grid is 600m by 600m. Beginning with a historically 'already' dehumanized urban fabric of the feudalist mode of urbanism, current development in China which is car-oriented exacerbates the problem. In China, we observe a combination of modernist urban planning with Chinese dynastic thinking which has resulted in a landscape of endless wide roads and superblocks, such that human beings have never seen before.

Urban Villages

In contrast to the state-led urbanism, spontaneous urbanism occurs at the urban fringe where cities merge with rural land. The hukou, and dual land tenure systems which once were the means to control social mobility, have now created the gap for informal, spontaneous urban development. We will discuss just one particular new urban form generated by this informal mode, namely, urban villages, or villages in the cities.

At first sight, urban villages in China today might remind you of those villages in London in previous centuries where the city spilled across the surrounding countryside and submerged everything in its path. But in China the situation is very different. On the one hand, real estate developers often ignore these densely populated villages because of the high compensation involved, instead taking only the rice fields around villages. This means that famers will lose their jobs. On the other hand, collective land ownership in the countryside in China does not allow people to purchase their land and move to another place legally. The only and the best opportunity for those former farmers was to turn their houses into rental apartment space for migrants, flooding into the cities.

In China today, there are around two thousand such urban villages where former farmers suddenly became rich land-lords and they represent a new type of petty capitalist. Because state-led urbanism

needs cheaper labour from the hinterland, it has ignored their need for housing and basic services, and the new petty capitalists have filled this niche.

The case of urban villages in modern China closely reflects the commercial zones outside the walled pre-modern cities. Both are the production of the petty capitalist mode which makes just a few rich and the majority poor. In the case of the urban village, a few owners (less than 20 percent of all people living in the villages) have now becoming landlords. The rest are a "floating population" who migrate temporarily to the cities, work hard for cheap wages, contribute massively to the Chinese economy, and do not even receive the right to stay and use public facilities in Chinese cities. In this way, Chinese modern cities although not walled, exclude the majority of people living there, serving only a new kind of "ruling class".

Other scholars might call the new rich group of people the emerging "middle class". However, we suggest the term "ruling class" to be more suitable as this group does not fight for equality, does not contribute to shape the civil sphere, but instead builds new luxury gated communities for itself.

Conclusion

In this paper we have attempted to build three arguments concerning the form of Chinese cities. After reviewing literature about this topic which we think is derived from a more or less one-sided assumption, we based our arguments on a political economic analysis done by Hill Gates. Thus, we suggest Chinese urban form is the result of the interaction between a state-sponsored and a spontaneous mode of urbanism which reflects the TMP and the PCMP respectively. In addition, from the political economic approach, we assume that the primary ideology behind any built form in China is functional even when it seems to follow some symbolic diagram.

The analysis of the relationship between TMP and PCMP of different regions in China has offered a method to identify not only different urban forms, but also the patterns of evolution from the pre-modern period until modern times. As Chinese social and physical form has to a great extent been always polarized, some related issues are inherent such as the absence of public space, and historical conservation. The solutions to these issues are unfortunately not in the hands of architects or urban planners. They might not even be necessary as the Chinese have learned the art of living and enjoying life within a small gap between the two forces of life for a thousand years.

[1] Shenyang, Beijing, Shanhaiguan, Datong, Taiyuan, Linzi, Pingyao, Jinan, Lanzhou, Biangliang, Luoyang, Xi'an, Xiangfan, Chengdu, Chongqing (strong TMP/weak PCMP); Nanking, Natong, Suzhou, Hangzhou, Huizhou, Nanchang, Guangzhou, Foshan (strong TMP/strong PCMP); Fuzhou, Quanzhou, Chaozhou, Xiamen (weak TMP/strong PCMP) and Lanzhou, Xinning, Urumqi (weak TMP/weak PCMP).

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