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Chao Ye, Xiangyi Ma, Ruishan Chen and Yongli Cai

Marginalised countryside in a globalised city: production of rural space of Wujing Township in Shanghai, China

This paper takes Wujing Township of Shanghai as a typical case to examine the process and dynamics of the production of rural space in China. Although Shanghai has generally become more urbanised and globalised than ever, the rural area in Shanghai is relatively marginalised. Production of space, as a social theory focusing on interactions between capital, power and class and their impacts on urbanisation, is applied into one such micro-scale case of community development. There are three categories of social space separations in Wujing. The main driving force of producing these separations is power: top-down policymaking represses bottom-up community self-organising. Rising housing prices driven by capital not only makes the locals only care for benefit from housing demolition, but also enlarges the gap between the locals and the migrants. It is the increasing strength of capital and power and weakened local voices that undermine community-based social space in Wujing.

Keywords: globalised city, rural development, production of space, social space, community, Shanghai

Introduction

Rapid urbanisation in recent years has changed traditional rural-urban relations greatly. Although levels of urbanisation differ across developed and developing countries, the expansion of cities can be seen across the board. At the same time, rural restructuring and redevelopment have become large challenges for most countries – even in countries that are 80 per cent urbanised – because the countryside is often overlooked (Antrop, 2004; McCarthy, 2008). China has experienced rapid urbanisation since its 1978 economic reform, leading to large changes in land use and population throughout the country (Zhang and Song, 2003; Liu et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2016). China's rapid urbanisation happened nationwide (Zhou, 2006). The comprehensive level of urbanisation in China has seen a continuous increase in economic growth and a greatly changing geographical landscape (Zhang and Song, 2003; Chen et al., 2010). With such uneven development during this process, many environmental and social problems like the widening rural-urban gap have emerged (Hua et al., 2008; Long et al., 2011; Cui and Shi, 2012; Chen et al., 2014; Li et al., 2015). The economic and social developments have reshaped even the rural areas, making rural redevelopment

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a key issue in national policy (Rigg, 1998; Zhang, 2008). These shortcomings have resulted in some arguing that the 'beautiful village planning' from 2005 focuses only on the aesthetic of rural areas, ultimately failing to support these communities (Lang et al., 2016). From an institutional or political view, the rural-urban dualism of land ownership and household registration is the primary reason for resistance towards rural restructuring (Long et al., 2016). Rural development, then, is not only about the rural itself, but also related to the urban and urbanisation, rendering present-day rural challenges more complicated than ever. Rural reconstruction, which is influenced by national economic and national policies as well as globalisation, needs a social theory to analyse (Long and Liu, 2016).

Rural areas are heterogeneous, dynamic and dystopic (Cloke, 2003). These key characteristics make rural research a cross-disciplinary field of study. Rural research should mainly focus on rurality, rural space and rural identities connecting multi-disciplinary theories and methods including geography, sociology, economics, planning and so on (Marsden, 1994; Roche, 2003; Woods, 2009; 2010). In the past, rural research has often been carried out on a single perspective like politics, economics, sociology and geography (Woods, 2008; Yang et al., 2016; Long et al., 2016), but lack of an integrated rural theory. Therefore, production of space, which integrates the theories of political economics, human geography and sociology into urbanisation research, is a suitable theory to apply to rural research. Production of space mainly means capital, power and class shape urbanisation and finally make urban space and urbanisation become their product, which becomes an important theory to study the urban issues and urbanisation since 1970s (Harvey, 1973; 1985; Soja, 1980; 1989). Production of space is widely used for some empirical cases on urbanisation (McGee, 2009; Buser, 2012; Leary, 2013; Nasongkhla and Sintusingha, 2013; Wilson, 2013; Nguyen and Locke, 2014; Ye et al., 2014). However, contrary to rich theoretical and practical achievements on the urban, the study on production of rural space is still extremely limited, except for several valuable explorations (Halfacree, 2007; Frisvoll, 2012). Marsden (1996) pointed out that rural geography needs to be rethought from the angle of the interaction between space and society, between the natural and the social. In fact, as a link between the rural and the urban, production of rural space has a natural and necessary connection with urbanisation or the urban space. Thus, the bias ignoring the countryside should be revised and reversed (Whatmore, 1993), especially research about the relations between urbanisation and production of space.

Shanghai is a globalised city that has undergone a diversified urban-rural transition in the process of urbanisation since 1990s. Contrary to common belief, rural areas in Shanghai are still lagging behind the city centre. Globalisation and urbanisation help improve Shanghai's economic growth and a large number of migrants, at the same time, brings people under pressure of high housing prices, which produces more change and uncertainty for the local community. Even the villages of Wujing,

have been influenced by them. In this article, we also describe Shanghai's influence on Wujing, especially from high housing prices and migrants. Wujing is a typical case of a marginalised town with five villages in Shanghai, and this article seeks to apply the production of space theory into practice to explore this marginalisation process, and the forces and dynamics of production that are acting on this rural space. In the article, production of space in Wujing takes place together with new rural planning. Based on the period of the planning 'beautiful countryside construction of Wujing', it began in December 2016, and ended in early 2018.

Methodology

Research method

This paper draws its data from statistical yearbooks and a questionnaire. Minhang Statistical Yearbook (SMDBS 2011–2016) and Shanghai Statistical Yearbook (SBS 2016) are used to grasp the basic situation in Wujing and serve as the research background and analysis basis. A simple survey of residents' daily lives was conducted. A total of one hundred questionnaires was issued, and ninety-two valid questionnaires were collected. The details of the valid samples are shown in Table 1. In terms of qualitative research, the authors used interviews to understand the residents' attitudes towards community construction, the residents' living conditions, neighbourhood relations and so on. At the same time, the authors participated in the project named 'Beautiful Countryside Construction of Wujing', in order to understand rural construction from the government's perspective. In short, through these materials and methods, the authors can analyse the production of space in Wujing from various aspects.

Table 1 Valid questionnaire information

Item	Category and proportion			
Sex ratio	Male: 52%		Female: 48%	
Age distribution	13% (<25)	26% (26–40)	35% (41–55)	26% (>56)
Type of resident	local		nonlocal	
	57%		43%	

Source: Authors' survey

A framework on urbanisation and production of rural space

Before the 1970s, space is often seen as a physical existence or like a kind of container without value judgments, which ignores the individual, political and social relations shaping ‘space’ and so failing to provide reasonable explanations for the interactions between the social and space (Smith, 1984; Ye et al., 2011). With the core argument that ‘(social) space is the (social) product’, production of space was put forward in the 1970s by the French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre and the production of space is deemed as one of the most remarkable spatial theories (Lefebvre, 1991). Space and social relations are linked together: the different classes or societies produce their spaces; at the same time, these spaces are also shaping or influencing social relations and process.

The theory of production of space means the urban space is constantly reshaped by the political, economic and social factors which are mainly embodied by power, capital and class (Ye et al., 2014). Power acts through policies, discourses or governance. Capital runs through distributing resources and dominates uneven development in different regions. The process of urbanisation includes high-income and low-income groups and these groups occupy different spaces. In other words, different social groups produce different social spaces so that the gap among the social groups widens. Shanghai is a typical case to reflect on urbanisation and production of space. In particular, the rural development of Shanghai also reflects the process of production of space.

This article attempts to analyse the production of space of Wujing and explore the factors that shape rural development. Urbanisation is mainly represented with a transforming process from rural space to urban space. It should be noted that Wujing is influenced by the development of Shanghai, thus the production of space in Wujing should be analysed in the context of globalisation and urbanisation. The core

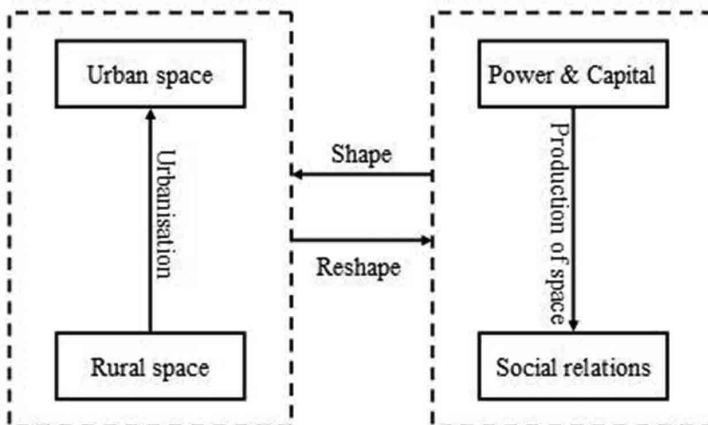


Figure 1 The framework on the relation between production of space and urbanisation
Source: SMDBS (2011; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016)

meaning of production of space lies in changing social relations produced by power and capital as the dominant forces that influence and divide social classes. Hence, the space reflects not only the scene and location of things but also the products of a set of specific social relations interaction. The production of rural space is dynamic and a simple framework (Figure 1) can be used to explain the relationship between urbanisation and production of space. Urbanisation and production of space are regarded as two systems which interact and intertwine. The relationship between them is shaped and reshaped by each other.

Production of space in Wujing

Wujing Town as a case study

The rural construction of Wujing is a typical case of new rural construction. First, Wujing is in Minhang District of Shanghai, which is one of the most developed areas in China, and also has a rich cultural heritage. Shanghai is an important economic, transportation, science and technology hub in China. Shanghai cooperates with Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui to form the Yangtze River Delta of China urban agglomeration. However, as a global city, Shanghai's villages are not developed well.

Table 2 Comparison between Shanghai and Minhang District in 2015

Index	Shanghai	Minhang District
Permanent population (ten thousand)	2,415	254
Household population (ten thousand)	1,443	107
Migration (person)	62,789	9,548
Per capita disposable income (yuan)	49,867	50,912
GDP (100 million yuan)	25,123	1,965
Primary industry GDP	110	1
Second industry GDP	7,991	1,014
Third industry GDP	17,023	950
Grain output (10000 tons)	112	1
General public budget revenue (100 million yuan)	5,520	628
General public budget expenditure (100 million yuan)	6,192	344
Number of downstream units	17	14

Source: SBS (2016); SMDBS (2016)

Secondly, Wujing contains towns that have been transformed by urbanisation and industrialisation, as well as villages in cities and pure countryside. For this reason,

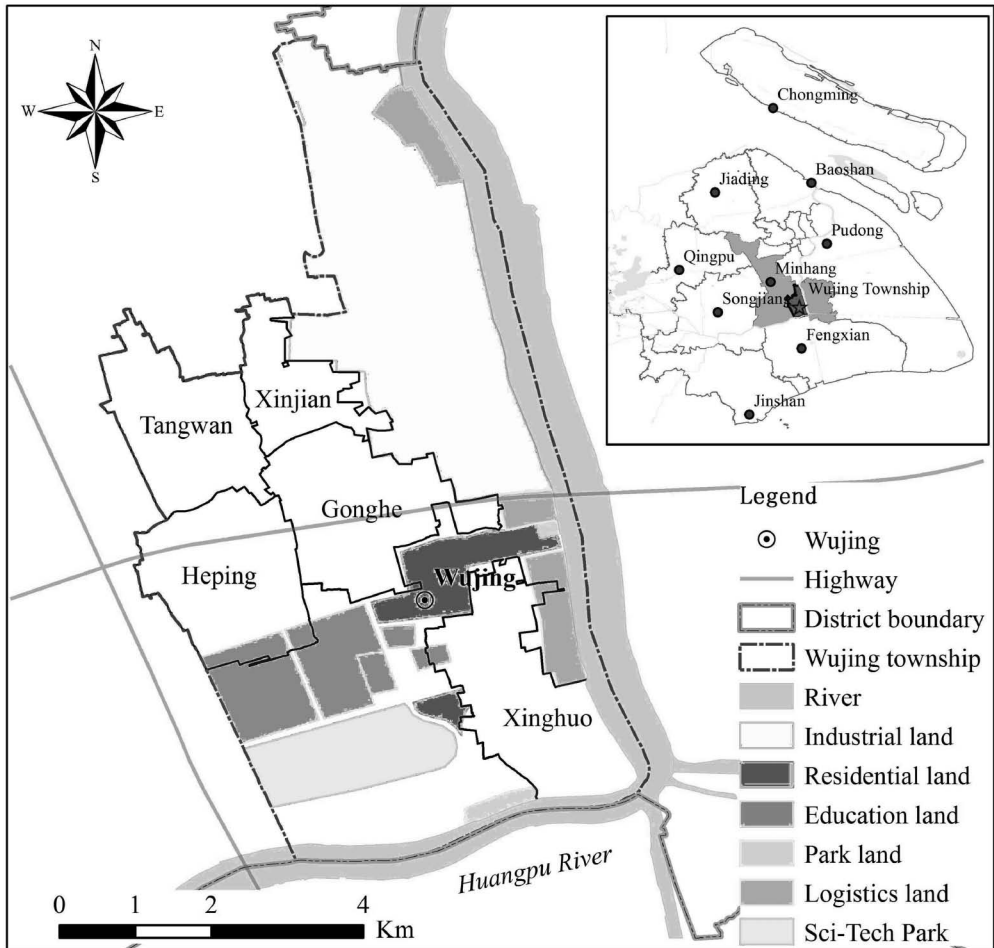


Figure 2 Location of Wujing township in Shanghai
Source: SMDBS (2011; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016)

studying this area will involve different rural constructions and provide more valuable materials. Table 2 shows the comparison between Minhang District – the administrative unit of Wujing – and Shanghai in 2015.

Thirdly, Wujing is a town near to the centre of the city and contains several institutions (Figure 2). A variety of cultural and scientific institutions are located in Wujing, including universities, science parks and a national high-tech industry developmental zone. Accordingly, Wujing is a diverse and complex area. It is actually both a rural space and an industrial base. Moreover, compared with the developed inner city without countryside, Wujing is located at the suburb and has five villages, which is

often called the ‘countryside’ of Shanghai by local people. This also means Wujing is marginalised in Shanghai. Meanwhile, Wujing is suffering from the impact of migrants, bringing much change and uncertainty to the local community. According to the interviews, most of the migrants come from Anhui Province and mainly work in nearby factories or are working as waiters. Because of high housing prices, they have to rent, which brings income to the local villagers. There seems to be a contradiction between locals and migrants. The migrants complain that the locals always ignore them; however, the village committee also report that migrants often do not cooperate with management. Hence, the new rural construction of Wujing involves many important factors and aspects.

The villages in Wujing Township have both similarities and differences with other traditional Chinese villages. On the one hand, like other Chinese rural areas, the villages in Wujing have a village committee. Grass-roots organisations are very important in China and are established by democratic elections, which can protect the rights of rural residents and realise the autonomy of villagers. The main tasks of these committees are to mediate residents’ disputes, to maintain social order and to convey the villagers’ opinions, demands and suggestions to the town government. Despite such roles, these village committees are also under the jurisdiction of the town government. On the other hand, due to the impact of urbanisation and globalisation in the city, these villages are also unique. Shanghai, being one of the largest cities of China attracts many migrants. Thus, Wujing shows a widespread phenomenon of a larger migrant population than local population (Figure 3).

The rural development of Wujing has been affected by various policies and experienced a lot of ‘new rural construction’, referring to economic, political, cultural and social construction of the countryside. At the same time, Wujing is striving for ‘beautiful countryside construction’ and the ‘establishment of a national civilised city’; they are managed by different departments. In view of these aspects, the rural development of Wujing is influenced by various social classes, which are constantly affected by the power and capital. The process and dynamics of production of rural space construction need to be further explored.

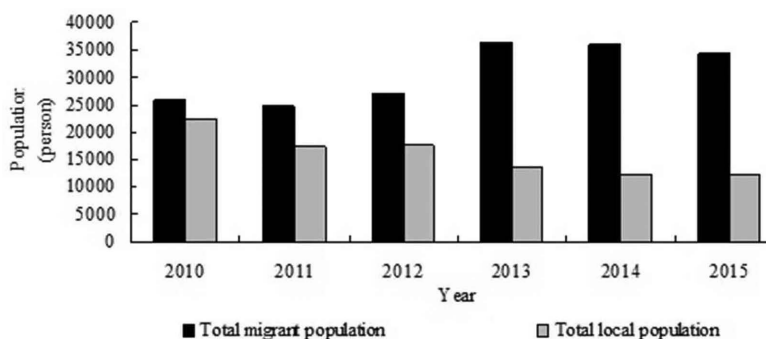


Figure 3 Migrants and the local people of Wujing from 2010 to 2015
Source: SMDBS (2011; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016)

The characteristics and dynamics of spatial production in Wujing

The core issue of rural development in China is social space, and the basic unit in China is the community. Social space is perceived and used by social groups, which can reflect social values, preferences and pursuit (Johnston et al., 1994). However, social space is also the product of external forces. Power and capital play an important role in promoting the development of rural community in China and shaping the social space. The rural population is regarded as the main source of labour for the urban areas. Since 2005, the Chinese government has implemented numerous policies to build the new socialist countryside with the goal of ‘advanced production, improved livelihood, civilised social atmosphere, cleaning and tidy villages and efficient management’, which emphasises ‘people-oriented’ and ‘local conditions’ in the construction process (Long et al., 2010). However, in actuality, ‘people-oriented’ and ‘local conditions’ are often overlooked or cannot be put into practice effectively. The reason for this is closely related to the role of power and capital in the process of urbanisation. Wujing Township, as a case study, can help us to find a reasonable explanation.

The role of power and capital

The role of power and capital is reflected in shaping the social space of Wujing. In China, the manifestations of power are official policies and institutions that cannot be violated; meanwhile, different classes in fact hold different powers. For example, the rural construction in Wujing is under the jurisdiction of the Minhang District Government, the Wujing Town Government and the village committee. Capital refers to ‘an asset to be mobilised by a group, individual or institution as wealth ... it is not a thing, but is a “social relation” that appears in the form of things (money, means of production)’ (Gregory et al., 2009). For example, locals have the capital of real estate compared with migrants. In Wujing, the flow of capital among different classes is not balanced either. Actually, in rural-urban planning, the governments of different levels including the village committee dominate and decide who can make the planning decisions, who can be included in the planning process and which village can get more funds. The combination of power and capital shaped the social space of Wujing.

Separations exist in productive spaces, living spaces and ecological spaces. Many villages of Wujing have rivers passing through, which is a very important natural space. However, the residents of Wujing are unable to gain direct access to the river as the river is cordoned off for security considerations. In the planning process, we learned that these rivers are designed for government to achieve the new rural construction objectives of beautifying the township. As a consequence, this measure



Figure 4 Division of the road, river and forest land

Source: Authors' survey

does not actually benefit the residents significantly. Similarly, many woods in the town were also surrounded by steel wires, resulting in very clear separations between the roads, rivers, houses, forests and fields in the villages (Figure 4). The benefits of natural spaces to the liveability of the township are thus limited due to the lack of access.

In addition, a survey was conducted to investigate the types of residents' daily activities and the frequency of use of the public amenities (Figure 5). Housework accounted for a considerable proportion in the daily activities' survey amongst married and middle-aged women: middle-aged women spend their time taking care of children, cooking and other household chores, whereas younger married women take care of the children when the grandparents are not available to help, and spend their time working and doing housework. Chess, walking and fitness activities are other popular leisure activities of residents. The survey shows that most people use the park frequently corresponding to the residents' preferred leisure activities. In addition, some young people do not have time to go to these public spaces because of their busy work. In sum, most of the residents have a very strong demand for public activity spaces. If the community does not provide certain public places for residents to use, then the residents who need the activity spaces will have a lower overlap. The separation of space will lead to social space problems (Wang et al., 2013).

The universities, scientific park, urban village and villages of Wujing are separated. Wujing is home to many world-class tertiary institutions such as Shanghai Jiao Tong University, East China Normal University and the scientific park of Wujing. These institutions give Wujing rich scientific and technological resources. However, the universities and the high-tech Park in Wujing do little work on village development or for residents. For example, Heping village, which is located north of the universities and the scientific park only 3–7 km away, did not get the help from them in the construction of the village. Also, the universities and the scientific park have taken

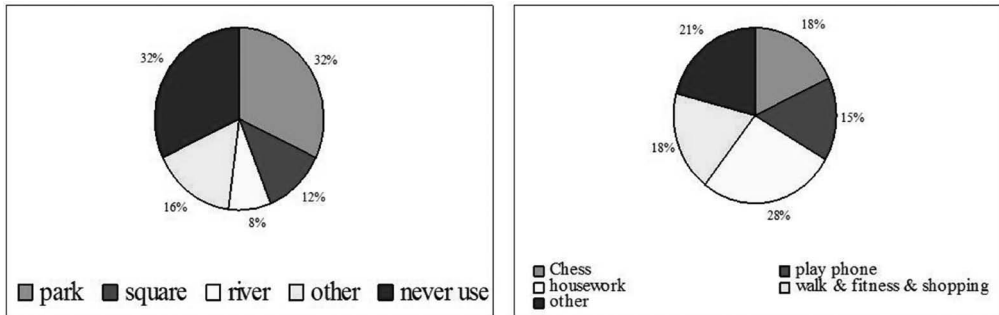


Figure 5 Frequency of use of the public amenities and types of residents' daily activities
Source: Authors' survey

measures to ensure the quiet and safety inside of their locations, such as building walls and erecting 'no entry' signs for foreign vehicles. These measures lead to the separation between city roads and private roads inside. Pedestrians and cars can only bypass the line; these measures also caused the separation of internal resources and external accessibility. The spatial isolation between these institutions and the town result in the lack of communication and interaction between various social groups. In addition, in the 'Minhang 2035 Plan', Wujing Town is positioned as the core area of scientific and technological innovation, which indicates that the plan will promote the development of science parks, scientific research institutions and universities. Wujing's rural space is being marginalised, uneven and perhaps even disappearing in the future. These help explain why Heping village has not developed well despite being very close to the universities and scientific park.

One of the products of rapid urbanisation is the 'urban village', which is surrounded by urban construction land. Despite the urban village playing a positive role and undertaking some responsibilities previously shouldered by city governments, they are still viewed as an unregulated asset (Liu et al., 2010). There is an increasing migration trend of wealthier villagers moving to urban areas due to the good medical and educational levels and more social security. Meanwhile, the rural areas, with its low-cost housing, attracted some migrants who came to Shanghai from other provinces to live here. Hence, the social structure of the countryside consists mainly of the elderly, the poor and the migrants. In the process of urban village renovation, universities did not fully consider the equal supply of education; the scientific park has not provided jobs for rural people. That is why the rural areas cannot benefit from the universities and the scientific park, which is mainly due to government policies. In their policies, the government favoured the development of enterprise to increase local economic income and government taxation, but without considering how this would benefit the residents in areas such as employment and social services.

There is a large estrangement between migrants and locals. In 2015, there were

12,151 locals and 34,394 migrants in Wujing, and migrants accounts for 74 per cent of the total population (SMDBS, 2016). The migrants and local people lack communication, which can be largely attributed to the migrants being too busy with work because of needing to earn money to pay rent. This leaves little time for locals and migrants to interact, let alone build a harmonious community. The lack of effective communication results in considerable misunderstandings between the locals and migrants, and a lack of common meeting space further exacerbates the issue. The household registration system is an important rigid constraint, meaning migrants cannot get the local household registration accounts they need and so weakening their own local identity, which may cause more conflicts and contradictions.

The production of rural space is influenced by power. Wujing was a famous industrial base and many chemical companies are located here. However, with the development of Minhang Riverside and transformation of the old industrial park, most companies have been ordered to stop or to be relocated. Several remaining enterprises, such as thermal power plants, have not yet moved away. The reason is that the relocation is a gradual process. What is more, they are large state-owned enterprises, which play an important role in regulating the national economic goals, thus, their shutting down and relocation involves a wide range of interests.

Capital is often distributed unequally by power. The housing prices in Wujing Township have been on an upward trend in recent years (Figure 6). The price increase affects the residents in different ways. The migrants who rent houses must spend more time working to make money for the rising rent. Therefore, the migrants' sense of belonging is weak, making them not care about how to rebuild the village. The locals who have their own property hope the house prices continue to rise and then be demolished to get good compensation or better housing, and so they do not care about the construction of new socialist countryside either. Since almost all residents, then, are not concerned about the countryside construction, the new countryside building seems to make no sense in the end.

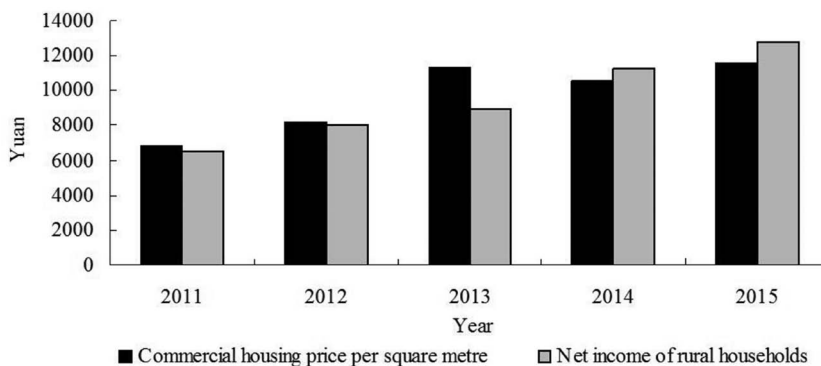


Figure 6
The trend of commercial housing price and per capita net income of rural households in Wujing
Source: SMDBS (2011; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016)

From the rural construction in Wujing, we can see that urbanisation has promoted rural development. The policy of rural development has accelerated the changes in rural areas and improved the living environment in the countryside, which is at least cleaner and tidier than before. Different classes have different power and capital in this process, which makes them have different views on rural construction, thus affecting the process and effect of rural construction. As a result, the social space in Wujing is the result of the interaction of power and capital. Furthermore, the villagers' committee does not represent villagers' opinions effectively. The committee is not only prejudiced against migrants but must also accept decisions from the town government, which has overall jurisdiction. As a result, the committees do not convey the needs of residents to the powers above and just to achieve some policy objectives. The role of power is largely overwhelming and reflects across all aspects of the space, housing, life, work, etc. Capital has further deepened the separation situation that has already been formed. Eventually, the social classes are separated in the production of space.

The marginalised villages

The reasons leading to marginalised rural areas have received little attention. Table 3 shows that the countryside has a much lower residents' income and less public infrastructure than the urban areas. It is noted that Minhang is the suburb of Shanghai, so the more distant suburbs could be even worse. Capital and power were only concentrated in a few places, whilst the places which need to develop did not receive government attention and financial support. The concentration of power and capital has made new countryside construction deviate from the 'people-oriented' goal ('people-orientated' means 'take human development or human daily life as the most fundamental thing').

Table 3 Minhang District rural residents have lower income and public facilities

	2014		2015	
	Minhang District	Shanghai	Minhang District	Shanghai
Per capita disposable income of rural households (Minhang District)/urban households (Shanghai)	27,560	47,710	30,130	52,962
Number of medical institutions	27	4,987	28	5,016
Number of schools	317	1,724	319	1,748
Number of libraries	1	25	1	25
Number of fitness facilities	1,344	11,091	1,360	9,905

Source: SBS (2016), SMDBS (2015; 2016)

At the same time, under the domination of power and capital, the community lacks vitality and cohesion. The new rural construction only concerns roads, environment and some other aspects of the villages' appearance. Other visible aspects, such as whether the village's living environment is clean and whether there is garbage are important indicators. Further, the implementation process has different standards in different villages according to the basic conditions of the villages. The constructions of the community and public spaces are neglected. Consequently, people – who are the key elements in the community – are marginalised while the external environment and the aesthetics of beauty take central position. However, it is worth noting that if 'people-oriented' cannot be implemented to a specific person and each type of person, then this statement will become ineffective.

Due to the construction of new socialist countryside and the role of high housing prices, locals are interested in 'demolition' because they might get better housing or higher compensation. The migrants are concerned about the housing rent, welfare and social spaces for their children and parents, but in fact, there are few public spaces in the community. In this community, both locals and migrants have a low sense of belonging and so the community is marginalised.

Discussion

The construction of new socialist countryside in China often emphasises 'people-oriented' and 'development based on local conditions', which are actually contradictory in practice due to the force of power and capital. 'People-oriented' emphasises the interests and needs of residents, which include both locals and migrants. However, in the reality of rural planning and development, the governments' power plays a pivotal role. Government has to achieve construction indicators rather than prioritise the interests of residents, so the residents have a very low sense of belonging. Coupled with the rising capital-driven real estate market prices, most of the locals are only concerned about demolition, while the migrants are more concerned about rising rents. 'Local conditions' emphasises that the development should be based on the specific local base and context. However, the local village of Wujing has gradually disappeared, and the new local characteristics have not been established. The construction of new socialist countryside neither achieves the aim of 'people-oriented' nor the 'local conditions'. Most importantly, in fact, the pattern of production of space is *contradictory* to 'people-oriented' and 'development based on local conditions'.

The combined effect of the power from the government and capital mainly represented by high housing prices makes the rural construction only superficial, rather than help promote community integration and any realisation of the notion of 'people-oriented'. The community building is not based on public opinion and is not developed in a bottom-up way. On the contrary, the pattern of top-down administra-

tive power is more popular and dominant than others, and is the biggest problem in rural reconstruction in China. As Long et al. (2012) indicated that the rural development policy was in essence a top-down strategy based on state intervention and it maybe encountered resistance in the implementation process, however, the rural development policy would protect farmers' rights and mitigate against rural protests when incorporating elements of 'bottom-up planning' into the strategy.

New rural (re)construction should initially be based on local conditions and should implement the different policies. However, the top-down pattern of uniform standardisation does not fully take into account local needs, instead only satisfying the so-called official standard. In the process of rebuilding countryside, the government always has the greater power, including discourse, distribution and planning, so the top-down policies play a decisive role. In addition, due to agriculture being more dispersed and agricultural income being lower than in urban areas, the residents do not care for pursuing the diversified life they want, and lose the sense of belonging. Under the pressure of rising housing prices driven by capital, the locals and migrants have no care or time for community. The gap between migrants and locals is enlarging so that building a harmonious community becomes a meaningless discussion in the end. The rural landscape has become the mirror of the discourse on government power.

From the case of Wujing, we can draw inspiration and guidance to achieve 'people-oriented' in the process of rural construction. The production of space is mainly manifested by the joint function of power and capital, so we will start there. First of all, power exists in government, village committees, social organisations and with residents. By raising the voice of social organisations and residents, it can balance the power away from the government. For example, the government could set up a policy that village construction must solicit opinions from residents, and select representatives of different classes to participate in the discussion on the rural construction. Secondly, the government should balance the capital allocation between locals and migrants. For the locals, a reasonable compensation policy for house demolition can be set up, for example people whose houses have been demolished could only get a compensatory house in their previous residence, rather than in the city centre. For the migrants, the government should provide a subsidy policy for renting and provide equal rights for education, medical treatment and so on. Finally, the community should strengthen the construction of public space and organise more community activities. Incentives should be used to motivate more residents to participate in community activities, so as to increase the migrants' sense of belonging and promote the harmony of the community.

Conclusions

With the progress of urbanisation, new rural problems in the world are constantly emerging and evolving. We are facing a challenge to rebuild countryside and for rural redevelopment in the future. The rural is a complex synthesis and must be considered from various viewpoints. Rural reconstruction should be done from a cross-disciplinary and time-space perspective. Cross-disciplinary perspective can help us make the connection with the understanding of rural history and rural future (Woods, 2012).

Production of space is a multi-disciplinary and appropriate theory from which to understand rural development in the process of urbanisation, which provides us with a new perspective and methodology to re-examine rural issues. There is a contradiction between the governmental goals of 'people oriented' rural development and the ways in which rural space is actually being transformed. Although the latter is emphasised by the main ideology, the pattern of production of space in China always prevails and destroys the people-oriented base. According to the Wujing Town case study in Shanghai, we have gained new insights into the relationship between urbanisation, rural community and production of space in China. Power and capital are two key forces or factors playing a dominant role in the production of space. The top-down policies are the initial force of rural development and the governmental officials hold more power than the residents. Some basic principles such as 'people-oriented' and 'development based on local conditions' are often ignored in the new rural construction. There is no consensus on community building.

The top-down tradition of countryside planning is changing, and a few residents also have been included in the plan-making process. However, the government-dominated pattern is not changed, and a great deal of rural construction funds come from government, which has weakened the interests of residents in planning. The reconstruction of villages and planning of the rural community should link to all stakeholders, upgrading the strengths of the locals, migrants and local communities in order to balance out the forces from power and capital. In the end, to achieve sustainable urbanisation is the most important thing in the future (Tan et al., 2016). Production of space is not only theoretical but also practical, and tries to intervene in or change society (Cresswell, 2013). This reminds us of the importance of methodology. In fact, the scholars, planners and researchers are residents, practitioners and citizens in the urban or the rural too. Thus the research will become more complex than ever, however, it probably is the proper beginning to approach the real world.

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