

©2009

Ju-chen Chen

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

**CAPITAL DREAMS: GLOBAL CONSUMPTION, URBAN IMAGINATION, AND
LABOR MIGRATION IN LATE SOCIALIST BEIJING**

by

JU-CHEN CHEN

**A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School-New Brunswick
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey**

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

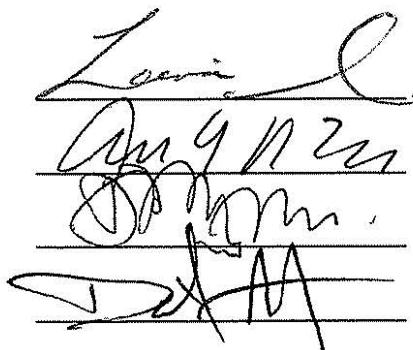
Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Anthropology

Written under the direction of

Louisa Schein

And approved by

Four handwritten signatures are stacked vertically, each on a horizontal line. The first signature is 'Louisa Schein'. The second signature is 'Ju-Chen Chen'. The third signature is 'John M. ...'. The fourth signature is 'J. ...'.

New Brunswick, New Jersey

January, 2009

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION
CAPITAL DREAMS: GLOBAL CONSUMPTION, URBAN IMAGINATION, AND
LABOR MIGRATION IN LATE SOCIALIST BEIJING

By JU-CHEN CHEN

Dissertation Director:

Louisa Schein

This dissertation addresses the remaking of Beijing, with a focus on social differentiations within and beyond the city, under the impacts of the late socialist Chinese state and the expansion of global capitalism in the early 2000s. It is argued that the early 2000s witnessed China transforming from being external-referencing to self-referencing. This research simultaneously investigated the city in global, national and local contexts. Multi-site ethnographic research was performed and a design of multiple informant groups was employed. This dissertation focused on Beijing, but included perspectives external to Beijing. Beijing was the main field site, but extensive ethnographic fieldwork was also conducted in Xi'an, together with several shorter research trips to various locations. Shifting perspectives within and outside of Beijing offered insights into how the physical place of Beijing is variously imagined and created. New social groups are emerging in Beijing during the Economic Reform era, and Beijing is a different place for every distinct group of inhabitants, meaning conclusions about Beijing depend on “whose Beijing” one is addressing. This dissertation focuses on three economically-differentiated

informant groups in the emergent social hierarchy of Beijing: a new privileged elite of business professionals, a poor working class of native Beijingers, and a new marginalized underclass of migrant laborers. The dynamics among these groups are examined through their consumption practices and use of mass media because these two domains of daily practice are crucial for identity negotiation in late socialist China. Analyzing social differentiations within and beyond Beijing, I posit that migrant laborers are the key group mediating different people and places. This dissertation argues that Beijing is more than a bounded place or ethnographic site but also a space of concrete social differentiations and virtual imaginations, often involving people and places external to the city. In terms of globalization, this dissertation argues that it is theoretically productive to examine a few areas within Beijing as “contact zones” of global and local communities and of emerging classes rather than considering the city a homogenous place that is undergoing globalization.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Writing this dissertation has been an adventure and has taught me a lot about myself. I started the quest with only the courage and curiosity typical of young minds. Now at the end of my journey, in addition to, hopefully, acquiring some knowledge, I have learned the importance of modesty and perseverance. This adventure would not have been possible without the many kind and critical people I encountered along the way. Without them simultaneously challenging and supporting me, I would never be here, ready to begin the next journey in my life. My gratitude to the following people and institutions exceeds what words can convey.

The Department of Asian Languages and Cultures and the Department of Anthropology at Rutgers University supported me through the years of coursework by offering me teaching assistantships (1996 – 1999 and 1999 – 2000, respectively). The National Science Foundation offered me not only the first major grant (Cultural Anthropology Program, Re: BCS-9904387, 1999 - 2000) to conduct long-term field research in China but also their strong and generous confidence in my scholarship. An ethnographic research small grant (2000 – 2001) from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc., supported me in staying in the field longer and enabled the multiple-sited ethnography. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing generously hosted my years of fieldwork research in China (2000 – 2001). Without the faculty and staff there and the support of the institute, my research in China would not have proceeded as smoothly as it did. The Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange (USA) offered Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship

(2001 – 2002) to support the writing phase of this project. Academia Sinica Fellowships for Doctoral Candidates in the Humanities and Social Sciences provided me not only writing grants (2002 – 2004) but also an intellectual home at the Sun Yat-Sen Institute for Social Sciences and Philosophy of Academia Sinica in Taipei, Taiwan. My gratitude to my home department, the Department of Anthropology, Rutgers University, is both immense and complex. The department allowed me to meet many wonderful fellow students and teachers. I thank the department for both the support and challenges it gave me. The training it offered made a stronger person.

Many teachers and senior scholars I met during different stages of my journey generously guided me through my moments of naivety, confusion, distress and excitement. In Taiwan, Professor Der-hui Yee was the first to encourage me to pursue Anthropology. Professor Ruey-ling Chu looked after me during every stage of my study. She provided me important connections that helped me begin my research in Beijing and supported my writing at Academia Sinica. I am immensely grateful to her confidence in and support for me. At Rutgers, Professor Richard V. Simmons proved a kind employer and teacher who supported me through my coursework years and remains a caring friend. Professors Xudong Zhang and Chun-fang Yu both gave me invaluable advice in the conceptual phase. Both of them reminded me of my unique Taiwanese perspective on China studies and encouraged me to consider this perspective seriously when analyzing my research materials. Professor Michael Moffatt, with his solid experience in ethnographic research, gave me precious suggestions during my proposal defense. Professor Caridad Souza has been a very special mentor and friend. On various occasions, both within and outside of the classroom, she introduced to me the perspectives of

minorities and hence the fascinating experience to examine a phenomena through various possible positions. She contributed to the focus of the project on intersecting categories of identities. Her peculiar style of mentoring was based on an equal and friendly relationship between master and apprentice. Among other social scientists in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Professors Luo Hongguang and Guo Yuhua patiently guided me in how best to do research in China. I want to give my special thanks to Professor Luo Hongguang who, despite his own busy research schedule, gave me a tour of his field site and shared generously his knowledge about China and anthropology. There are many other teachers and scholars who I cannot thank individually here. Our encounters were shorter, sometimes simply involving them offering a wise comment. Nevertheless, the influence was equally critical and my gratitude to them is equally sincere.

I have the most supportive and encouraging dissertation committee I could possibly wish for. Professors Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas and Daniel Goldstein both generously agreed to join my committee as my journey approached its end. While they only became involved towards the end of my journey, their enthusiastic support and suggestions were crucial in getting me to my destination. I am very grateful for the new perspectives and inspirations they provided. I only regret that our paths did not cross earlier. Professor Dorothy Ko offered criticism and advice during every stage of the project. She encouraged and accepted my bold proposal, reined me in whenever my imagination strayed too far, helped me develop several key arguments and focuses of the dissertation, and took my research seriously by encouraging and soliciting factual evidence and data. Professor Ko had an incredible ability to help clarify and develop unfinished thoughts, identify gaps in research and writing in an encouraging way, and kindle passion to pursue

an intellectual quest. She was an inspirational model teacher.

It is impossible for me to properly express my gratitude to my advisor, Professor Louisa Schein. There were many scary stories about difficult advisors and their unfortunate students, but I experienced none of this. Professor Schein is a serious scholar. From my earliest days at Rutgers she showed her respect for me by always being critical during our discussions and insisting on soliciting responses from a relatively quiet foreign student. She is a great mentor. Whenever she detected something interesting in my thoughts she never hesitated to nurture those thoughts through providing generous encouragement. She believed in me and persuaded me to think big before I realized my own potential. She constantly demonstrated not only enthusiasm for knowledge, but also the importance of prioritizing scholarly development. While patiently and carefully directing every stage of the project, she remained constantly open to my untested and often immature ideas. Her natural style of being both critical and encouraging nurtured my courage and confidence, and helped me systematically build up my knowledge and research ability. Besides being a great scholar and teacher, Professor Schein is also a caring friend. I often jokingly and affectionately called her “my Mama at Rutgers”. She had an amazing ability to understand the confusion and fear experienced by graduate students, and was always willing to offer generous help. The valuable lessons she taught me with regard to my dissertation, academia and motherhood are precious assets I will benefit from for years to come. I am also very grateful to the family of Professor Schein. Ernie, Sophia and Ernesto added plenty of memorable extra sparkle to my graduate school life.

This dissertation would never have proved such a pleasant journey, and my

courage would never have lasted long enough to take me to the finish line without the comradeship of the following friends. Among my fellow students at Rutgers University: Edgar Rivera Colon was my dutiful guardian angel from beginning to end. John Wiggins helped read my works, acted as my informant, offered frank and insightful reflections and, above all, gave me warm hugs and food whenever I needed. Hsiu-hui Su shared both my dreams and quandaries. She made me realize that I was not alone in the department and never failed to laugh with me through my moments of triumph and despair. Wendy Birky helped me through my early years as a foreign student. Her humor and friendship always brightened my world. Dhon Sewatarmra, Noriko Ishiyama and Johnelle Lamarque were a great group of friends during my years on campus, and our friendship and collegiality has lasted and grown even after we all moved away from the campus to different corners of the world. Their passion and curiosity towards knowledge and life are examples I will cherish for many years to come. Jane Park helped me enormously as I wrapping up my dissertation. She and her friendly family happily accepted my inconsiderate requests and were always ready to either clear my thoughts or fill my stomach. In addition to the Rutgers University community, my gratitude also goes to Sasha Welland, Terry E. Woronov, Wang Gan and Mary Ann O'Donnell – my “comrades” (gemenr!) in Beijing. The electric experience of talking about our field site and fieldwork while we were all in Beijing, followed by subsequent email exchanges and organizing a conference panel together, was enchanting and unforgettable. Their brightness and confidence set an example of (female) scholarship. Above everything else, it is simply wonderful to have sincere friends who share your interests and concerns. Susan Gordon, whom I met at Academia Sinica in Taipei, is a great writing partner. Her encouragement and firm

support through my writing years convinced me that I would definitely make it. Tracy Steen, with her wisdom and positive attitude, repeatedly persuaded me to keep things in perspective and enjoy every step of my journey, and finally helped me to realize that my dissertation is both a small step in my life and also a microcosm of it. Finally, Seamus Harris, my editor, did a great job in helping me convey my thoughts.

This dissertation would never have been realized without the genuine friendship and support of my informants and friends in Beijing, Xi'an and elsewhere in China. I wish to express my earnest gratitude to both those I named in this dissertation and many others I did not. For many of them, I carried an ambiguous identity as both a compatriot and an enemy, yet they chose to accept me as a friend, and tolerated my requests to participate in their lives even when those requests bordered on rude.

I want to thank my “families” in New Jersey, Beijing and Taipei. Although all my blood relatives are in Taiwan, years abroad have left me with a strong affection for homes in three places. Friends in both New Jersey and Beijing receive me as a home coming sister or daughter. In New Jersey, Sherry Lin, Doris Lihchyn Chern, Rene Chavez, Shiu-Ying Ho, Andrew Cheng, Rachel Chu, Anita Chu, Yin Long, Andrew Pu, Alice Wu, William Yeh, Marlies Lin and their families offered me not only friendship but also family warmth. In Beijing, Rubih Li, Howard Yang, Woan-lih Lin, Nae-kan Ren, Linda Mengling Lee, Martin Wu, Wenling Chao and their families helped me get set up as I began my fieldwork; then indulged me by offering tranquil retreats where I could nourish both my body and mind. The generosity shown by these families in New Jersey and Beijing is a debt I will never be able to repay.

Most of my family in Taipei had little idea about anthropology when I started my

degree, and as I complete my journey many years later their understanding of and agreement with a career in anthropology remains limited. Nevertheless, they never seriously tried to stop me from pursuing my dreams; they waited patiently, allowed me to indulge myself, and stood by waiting to celebrate my successes unreservedly. My debt to my parents, Jeen-Cherng Chen and Chen-Chih Su, and parents-in-law, A-chen Huang and Yueh-feng Jen, is immense, and I can only say thank you for indulging me. Thanks to my brothers, Chao-liang and Nine, and brother- and sisters-in-law, Jerry, Shan-ju, Hope and Shu-cheng, who looked after our parents while I selfishly lost myself in an intellectual world. I also want to thank my three younger cousins Chiao-hui, Chiao-ning and Chiao-chun. They admired me blindly and never objected to me abusing their good faith with constant phone calls, emails and MSN messages seeking their cheerleading, companionship, ideas and help. Finally, my deepest gratitude and debt goes to my husband Linjie and son Xiao-you. Four year old Xiao-you has grown up with Mommy frantically typing at her computer. Xiao-you cheered me up through filling my everyday life with infinite little surprises, inspiring in me a positive attitude towards life, and gracefully showing me the right way to write a “dissertation” as soon as he could grasp a crayon. Linjie accompanied me through the whole journey without asking where I was going. He gave me his full confidence and made himself available to provide all sorts of help as required: from household chores and child care, to research assistantship and proof reading, to being my personal psychologist and astrologer, and of course above all he gave me a secure and loving home. Linjie has not only believed in me every step of the way, but has also been willing to participate in all of my adventures. He left me alone when I needed, and encouraged me whenever required. The trust he showed me exceeds

my own scholarly achievements.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgement	iv
1. Introduction	1
1) Prelude: The City of Poplar Trees	1
2) Overview of Study Focus and Design	3
i. The Informants	4
ii. The Field Site: Beijing and Beyond	5
iii. The Time of the Study	7
iv. Evolving Research Focus and Perspective Regarding Globalization	7
3) Introducing China's Internal Differentiations	9
i. Toilets and Uneven Development of China	9
4) Consumption and the Use of Mass Media	12
i. Enlarged Difference in Wealth and Consumption	13
ii. Mass Media, the Communist State and the Economic Reform	14
5) Value of Using Multiple Field Sites	15
i. Why Beijing	16
a. Between Socialism and Capitalism	17
b. Between China and the World	17
c. Between Tradition and Modernity	18
d. Between the State and the Nation	18

ii. Why Xi'an	19
6) The Three Key Informant Groups	19
7) For Research on Global Cities and Economic Globalization	21
8) Synopsis	22
9) The Researcher as a "Native Anthropologist"	27
i. A Taiwanese Ethnographer in China and Emerging Chinese Identities	28
2. From Economic Reform to Hosting the Olympics: Chinese State Policy and the Global Economy	32
1) Researching a Time of Transition	32
2) Social Differences in Beijing in the Early 2000s	34
i. Mixture of Differences	34
ii. My Window View: an Example of Beijing's Mixture of Difference	36
iii. The Early Rich Theory and Emerging Social and Regional Differences	39
iv. <i>Jieji</i> (Class) and <i>Jieceng</i> (Stratification)	42
3) Late Socialist China during an Age of Economic Globalization	46
i. Deng Xiaoping's Reform in Retrospect	47
ii. Encounter of Late Socialism and Early Capitalism	51
iii. The Late Socialist Conditions of Economic Globalization	55
4) The Olympic Era: A New Self-referencing Epoch	59
i. A Flourishing Age (<i>Shengshi</i>)	59
ii. Olympic Era	64
iii. From External-Referencing to Self-Referencing	67
5) Multiple Worlds, Multiple Dreams	72

3. Consumption, Class ‘Contact Zones’ and Emerging Social Differentiation in Beijing	75
1) ‘Contact Zone’ of China’s Economic Globalization	75
2) The Central Business District (CBD)	78
i. Diversity of the Central Business District	78
ii. Plan for the Central Business District	83
iii. Everyday Lives of Business Professionals in the Central Business District	85
iv. Everyday Lives for Other Residents in the Central Business District	92
v. Space Making and Emerging Social Order	98
3) Consumption and Social Differentiation	102
i. The Novelty of Disposable Income	104
ii. A Periodic Market in Xijiang	106
iii. Consumption, Xiaofei and Late Socialist Consumers	108
iv. Consumption-mediated Social differentiation	113
4) Liulichang: a Center and Margin of the City	119
i. Sassen’s ‘A New Geography of Centrality and Marginality’	120
ii. “The Life of the Real Ordinary Beijingers”	123
iii. Liulichang as a “Contact Zone”	129
5) Conclusion	135
4. Mass Media, Urban-rural Differences and Imagining the Capital	137
1) Imagining Beijing	137
i. From Xi’an: Imagining the Capital/ the Nation	140
ii. From Heilongtan: Imagining Urbanization	150
iii. From the Hutong: Imagining a Global City	157

2) Mass Media in Creating National Image	162
i. The “Throat and Tongue” of the Communist Party	163
ii. Imagining the Nation and the Capital through Mass Media	168
3) Urban-Rural Differences in Beijing and China	170
i. China’s Urban-rural Division	171
ii. Mass Media and Emerging Urban-rural Differentiation	177
iii. Beijing as a Strategic Place	184
4) Conclusion	191
5. Migrant Laborers as Mediators Within the City and Between the City and the Countryside	193
1) Migrant Laborers as Mediators	193
2) Characteristics of Labor Migration in Reform China	198
i. Mediators between Regions and within Cities	198
ii. Mobility is their Last Resort	202
iii. Migrant Laborers as Subjects of both Cities and the Countryside	208
3) Bringing the Urban to the Rural	210
i. Dreams of New Family Houses	211
ii. Introducing the City through Mass Media	214
iii. Migrant Laborers as Performers of Urban Styles	218
4) Bringing the Rural to the Urban	220
i. “Peasants” in the City	220
ii. Migrant Laborers as Representatives of the Countryside	223
iii. The Urban Lower Class	225

5) From Rural Peasants to Urban Insiders (Chengliren)	229
6. Conclusion	242
1) Summary	242
2) Key Issues and Developing Thoughts	244
i. The Importance of Social Differentiations	245
ii. Multiplication of Space in Beijing and Contact Zones	246
iii. Migrant Laborers as Mediators among People and Places	247
iv. Mass Media Studies and Reflection on Anthropological Field Sites	250
3) Beijing after the Olympics	251
 Bibliography	 253
Glossary	258
Curriculum Vita	268

1

INTRODUCTION

Prelude: The City of Poplar Trees

Beijing is a city of poplar trees. One of the first impressions of modern visitors of Beijing is driving into town on the Airport Expressway flanked by thousands of attractive tall poplar trees. Poplar trees were not natives of Beijing but were introduced to the city by the municipal government in the early 1970s to green the city because of their being cheap, attractive, and fast-growing. The millions of poplar trees planted succeed in giving Beijing a green appearance.

However, in addition to green, poplar trees also bring to Beijing the spectacle of “April snow (*siyue xue*).” Every April, white, soft, snow-like cottony catkins of poplar trees fall all over Beijing. The beautiful snowy catkins are everywhere, becoming a nuisance as they stick to cars and clothes, float through windows and doors, and take over indoor spaces. April in Beijing is also the season of severe sandstorms. After falling to the ground the snowy catkins mix with sand and dirt to form dirty cottony balls that scurry along the ground in the windy Beijing spring. Worse is to come, though, as rain showers eventually transform the cottony dirt balls into a muddy mess that makes the entire city look extremely unkempt.

One of the key moments of my fieldwork in Beijing, on which this dissertation is based, occurred during the April Snow. On a cool afternoon in April 2000, I was having a

baked potato and tomato salad lunch at an outdoor café and restaurant on Sanlitun Bar Street – a famous shopping and nightlife destination catering to foreign visitors and residents as well as Beijing’s young urban professionals – as fluffy catkins fell silently into my food. It was around the beginning of my fieldwork. I had my notebook open and on the table and was distractedly trying to work as I ate. Other than the catkins that decorated my food, I also had to contend with constantly blaring horns from taxis and cars stuck in a traffic jam, vendors soliciting me in heavily accented Mandarin to look at the pirated CDs and Video CDs (VCDs) featuring Hollywood movies and English pop music they carried inside their jackets and bags, an elderly man in the blue workers uniform – a symbol of Maoist China still worn by the older generation – asking me to buy a toy grasshopper knotted from grass, and crowds of Chinese and foreign shoppers bargaining for knock-off brand name clothes across the street. The manager of the café and restaurant, a man in his late twenties from Xi’an, took away my dish and apologized for the intrusion of catkins into the food. I pondered my future research plan, still not realizing that right in front of my eyes, among the reproducing poplar trees, lay many of the key components of this dissertation: the convergence of highly economically-differentiated social groups in the city, the impact of growing consumerism and the globalization of markets on daily life, and thus on the production of identity, the roles of migrant laborers in urban and national societies and economies, and the interaction between national policy and the global economy.

Poplar trees beautified (and increased the value of) Beijing for the privileged – and often newly arrived and wealthy – residents who spent the majority of their time in air-conditioned buildings and vehicles, but they represented a burden for manual workers

responsible for city maintenance, and proved a constant nuisance to the majority of citizens who lived in older apartments and courtyard houses, used public transportation, and relied heavily on shared public space. Like many recent changes in Beijing, poplar trees represented different things to different groups. Since the early 2000s, the city government had begun considering the contribution of poplar trees to pollution and allergy problems, and had initiated plans to replace the city's millions of catkin producing poplar trees within the next few years.

Retrospectively, I have found poplar trees a good departure point from which to introduce this dissertation on the making and remaking of Beijing. The original planting of poplar trees throughout the city demonstrates key values and concerns of the state and city government and the people regarding the transformation of Beijing, and specifically its modernization, internationalization and development: an urgent desire to improve the appearance of the city; aggressive acceptance of foreign things and ideas; and an imaginative perspective on modernization and development. The result of the planting shows how transplanted things and practices may have surprising effects in local contexts; and how new plans and actions contribute to emergent social differentiations among city residents. The recent plan to replace the millions of poplar trees illustrates the speed and scope of change in the capital, and the confidence of the nation-state behind it in executing such changes. The above demonstrate a few of the essential features not only of Beijing but also of China's well-recognized late socialist transformation.

Overview of Study Focus and Design

This dissertation examines how China's late socialist state policy and the development of economic globalization influence the making of Beijing. Beijing, the capital of China, has undergone significant and rapid transformation since the late 1980s, designed to transform it into a world city that showcases the rise of China. Among all these transformations, this dissertation argues that the most intriguing and critical change is the emerging new social stratification of the city. This dissertation examines and analyzes the dynamics involved in the coexistence of highly economically-differentiated social groups in Beijing. Beijing is a different place for every distinct group of inhabitants, making conclusions about the current nature and development direction of Beijing impossible without knowing "whose Beijing" one is addressing.

The Informants

This dissertation thus focuses on three key informant groups occupying different positions in the emergent social hierarchy of Beijing: a new privileged elite of business professionals, a poor working class of native Beijingers, and a new marginalized underclass of migrant laborers. The residents of Beijing are more diverse than the three key informant groups this dissertation focuses on. Other social groups in the city include, for example, state officials, employees of state-owned enterprises and institutions, retirees, business owners, industrialists, and peasants. Besides, the distinctions among the various groups in the city were not absolute. It is possible for members of working class native Beijinger families to become business professionals (through acquiring higher education, for example) and there are examples of migrant laborers establishing

themselves in Beijing and becoming middle class residents with legal Beijing household registrations. I will further address why I chose to focus on the particular three informant groups later. Among the three key informant groups, this dissertation further examines the role of migrant laborers in urban and national societies and economies. As powerless and disadvantaged social subjects, migrant laborers are the key players in the late socialist changes in Beijing and China. I argue that migrant laborers are mediators for both uneven urban-rural economic development and material conditions and the emergent social hierarchy in the city. While arguing that the impact of China's state policy and economic globalization has resulted in uneven development and social differentiation both within and among cities, towns, villages and regions, this dissertation attempts to theorize about how migrant laborers – as sojourners traveling around the nation and moving back and forth between their rural homes and host cities – help suture together differentiated social groups and places, both materially and socio-culturally. Further details regarding the three key informant groups are addressed below in a separate section.

The Field Site: Beijing and Beyond

This dissertation focuses *on* Beijing, but does so from perspectives that are not limited to being *in* Beijing. The ethnographic research on which this dissertation is based was conducted both in Beijing and elsewhere. While taking Beijing as the main field site, I also conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork, lasting five months, in the second tier city of Xi'an, and took several shorter research trips to various locations, including Heilongtan, a rural village in the northwest, Xijiang, a minority village in the southwest,

Chang'an, a factory town in the south, and Shanghai. There were two main reasons for the use of multiple field sites for the study on Beijing. First, I argue that the emerging social differentiation and hierarchy in Beijing results from both changing relations between China and the world, and changing relations between Beijing and other places or regions within China. Among other things, the influxes of significant numbers of professionals and rural-peasants-turned-migrant laborers to the city highlight uneven development and conditions between Beijing and the homes of these domestic immigrants. The story of emerging social hierarchy in Beijing also involves the development of uneven relations among places on both the regional and national scales. Second, Beijing is not just a physical place as defined by its administrative and geographic boundaries, but is also a site of the imagination, and its importance for the “imagined community” (Anderson 1983, 2) of China cannot be overemphasized. As one of the leading Chinese metropolises, Beijing is an exceptional place within China. Nevertheless, Beijing is often taken as representative of China by Chinese officials, the Chinese people and foreigners. This imaginative equation between Beijing and China frequently brings material effects for the city. Hence, I argue that it is both interesting and necessary to consider the making of Beijing through multiple perspectives in and out of the city.

One reason I chose Beijing as the main focus of my field research was that as the capital city of the communist state, I believed Beijing would be the best site for me to study the intertwined influences from both the communist state system and economic globalization. Moreover, as one of the Chinese metropolises, Beijing was ideal for examining the impact of growing consumerism and market globalization on daily life and

identity production. Subsequently, as Beijing successfully won the right to host the 2008 Olympics, this event provided me an unexpected but valuable opportunity to address and analyze the transition of China during the early 2000s. I further explain the reasons this dissertation chose to focus on Beijing below in a separate section.

The Time of the Study

The main fieldwork on which this dissertation is based was conducted from March 2000 to June 2001, which I consider a key transitional time in the late socialist period of China. I argue that the early years of the new millennium are a transitional time between the post-1978 era of Deng Xiaoping's Economic Reform and Opening-Up and a new epoch, one which is still taking shape but appears epitomized by the staging of the Olympics in Beijing. This argument stresses the importance of the ethnography of the city at this critical time for subsequent anthropological studies in China.

Evolving Research Focus and Perspective Regarding Globalization

This dissertation is not only an ethnographic account of Beijing, but also an attempt to understand China's transformation and contemplate the nature and effect of economic globalization. Affected by the theories of Saskia Sassen regarding the global city and the movement of labor and capital (1991; 2006), and those of Arjun Appadurai regarding transnational flows and global cultural economy and commodities (1986; 1990; 1996), the research project on which this dissertation is based originally arose from a curiosity regarding how Chinese who grew up under an anti-capitalist education system reacted to and involved themselves in economic globalization through the use of transnational

commodity and, mainly, mass media. Initial questions asked included ones such as: “How do the popularization of transnational commodities and the proliferation of foreign and non-state mass media influence identity production in Chinese cities?” “How does economic globalization occur in specific urban settings?” “Is Beijing becoming a ‘global city’ (Sassen 1991)?” Originally, this dissertation was interested in examining whether and how Beijing – the representative metropolis of China and Chinese culture – might evolve into a global city. Logically such an evolution should involve the city becoming less embedded in the Chinese context and transforming into a node of and key site in the global community, developing characteristics that can be described variously as modern, cosmopolitan or supranational. In other words, my departure perspective assumed that Beijing must be either Chinese or global, as if the two were mutually exclusive. This assumption was soon challenged by the experience gleaned from my fieldwork. On the one hand, I attempt to clarify the making of Beijing without taking China and the world as counterparts; furthermore, on the other hand, I examine whether a dichotomy exists between the city and the countryside or between different social groups or classes, rather than between nation-states. The justification leads to new insights regarding the transformation of China and the nature and localized process of globalization. This dissertation then attempts to understand the localized process of globalization by adapting Pratt’s concept of “contact zones” (1992). Informed by the ethnographic fieldwork, this dissertation argues that regarding Beijing, and particularly a few districts of the city as contact zones is more appropriate for understanding and theorizing the impacts of economic globalization on the city and, in general, cities in the so-called newly-industrialized parts of the world, those that were previously “under-developed”.

Seeing places like Beijing – which is not a “frontier” or newly “discovered” land – as contact zones of economic globalization suggests that every “home” could be a frontier of contact between existing culture and society and the overwhelming influence of global culture and community, thus offering a new conceptualization of the relations between a given locale and the process of economic globalization.

Introducing China’s Internal Differentiations

A key challenge I encountered from an early stage of my fieldwork in answering the initial research questions of this project was the growing diversity in China, especially within its metropolitan cities. Rich and poor, urban and rural, new immigrants and native residents, the well-educated and those deprived of education by the Cultural Revolution, state officials, employees of foreign companies and employees of state-owned enterprises, all have different experiences and interpretations of foreign and “modern” ideas and of transnational capital, commodities and people. Which groups should one focus on to address cultural production and the social transformation of the city under the intertwined impacts of changing state policy and economic globalization? I argue that the impact of economic globalization on the late socialist cultural production and social life of China can be better understood through recognizing and analyzing the substantial differences within and between “local communities.” Considering the differences both within and between places, how to define a community itself becomes problematic.

Toilets and Uneven Development of China

During my fieldwork, a very concrete – and bodily – experience that helped me understand socioeconomic differences and uneven development in China involved the use of toilets. During a long-distance bus trip from Beijing to Northern Shaanxi in May 2000 I came to the profound realization that knowledge of China and its diversity, and of macro socioeconomic transformations such as globalization, modernization and urbanization, could be best obtained through such mundane daily practices as the use of toilets. Leaving from suburban Beijing in the early afternoon, the bus traveled westwards through Hebei and Shanxi provinces in turn, crossed the Yellow River, and finally entered Northern Shaanxi (*Shaanbei*) early the next morning. I was prepared for difficulties using toilets outside the city since even in the capital city, public toilets, built mainly to cater to residents of older courtyard house neighborhoods whose houses normally lacked private toilets, typically comprised simply a small building containing a few door-less, slippery, and smelly spaces partitioned by waist-height short walls and linked by a single trench into which all bodily waste was deposited, and offering no flushing facility, toilet paper or washbasin. Even given my low expectations, when the bus made a toilet stop soon after we crossed the Yellow River into Northern Shaanxi on a beautifully sunny early morning, I was stunned by the “toilet” I encountered. The toilet was simply a few holes in the ground set off the edge of the road and overlooking a valley in Northern Shaanxi’s Loess Plateau. There was no roof, no doors, and no partitions. The only semblance of a building was a short brick wall hiding the holes from passengers standing on the road. To use this toilet required exposing oneself to other users, and being half-naked when using the toilet was a very different experience to going

fully naked in a locker room, at a hot spring, or on a nude beach. When Professor Luo Hongguang of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences who was familiar with the area saw my hesitation, he gave the friendly advice that I should give up hope of finding a better equipped toilet later. “From here on,” he said, “there will be no toilets with dividing walls (*Cong zheli kaishi, jiu meiyou you qiang de cesuo le*).” He laughed brightly and cast me a meaningful look. “From here on” clearly conveyed that right there and now, in that beautiful morning in Northern Shaanxi, our party had entered a different China. That roadside toilet resembled a boundary stone dividing two different societies – the civilized urban and the uncivilized rural.

This journey occurred relatively early in my fieldwork. I later learned that tangible and materialized economic and social differentiations did not exist solely between cities and the countryside, but also within cities. In the context of economic and social differentiations within cities, toilets once again provide a good example. While lower class courtyard house residents continued to rely on the city’s notorious public toilets, wealthy professionals enjoyed spacious toilets in their apartments with marble counters, tile walls and floors, and high-quality imported fittings. These well-equipped toilets not only enjoyed hot running water 24-hours a day, but also toilet paper, fluffy towels, and laundry bags that were refilled, changed, cleaned, and emptied whenever necessary by housemaids who were often migrant laborers from small towns or the countryside. The toilets in the temporary residences of these housemaids contrast sharply with the toilets they help maintain. Most migrant laborers live with other migrants from adjoining towns or the same province in “migrant villages” located in the suburbs. Houses in these migrant villages in the city do not have their own toilets, and even lack

conventional public toilets. Instead, the toilet simply comprises a tiny space beside the dusty road, enclosed by ramshackle wooden boards. Traveling back and forth between the toilets of their employers and those in their urban villages on a daily or weekly basis, these housemaids crossed a significant yet elusive boundary between two worlds that were no less apart from each other than Beijing was apart from that Northern Shaanxi valley.

The notoriously poor public toilets, the well-equipped and maintained toilets of the rich, and the tiny dark and smelly spaces that serve as toilets for migrant villages are all realities of Beijing. The huge differences between them demonstrate a sense of social unevenness not only between the central city and the remote countryside, but also within the city. Toilet use is a mundane and inconsequential daily practice. Nevertheless, through illustrating the variety existing in toilets and toilet use, I aimed to demonstrate and elucidate the topic addressed in this dissertation: the unevenness of material development and the *disruptions and connections* existing between people and among places.

Consumption and the Use of Mass Media

The two chief domains of everyday practice through which I charted the dynamics between local cultural and social changes and global processes were: the use of mass media and consumption practice. During the period of late socialist reform (1978-present), China has undergone dramatic social and economic change, including: the

decentralization of state policy; the marketization of the economy; cultural liberalization; the popularization of transnational commodities; increasing wealth differentials; and, in the domain of mass media, reduced censorship and a shift towards entertainment and advertising. Although neither mass media nor consumption practice were new to China in the late Twentieth Century, qualitative and quantitative changes in these two domains made them into two key areas for negotiating identity during the late socialist period.

Enlarged Difference in Wealth and Consumption

Deng Xiaoping's Reform and Opening-Up policy (*Gaige Kaifang*) implemented from 1978 transformed China's economy and led the nation from material scarcity to abundance. However, both money and material resources have become increasingly unevenly distributed among places and people. Intriguingly, this unevenness results partly from the state strategy of "letting some people get rich first (*rang yibufen ren xian fu qilai*)". These differences in wealth have resulted in divergent consumption patterns, and associated differences in lifestyle and social status. During the 1980s, everyday technologies such as washing machines, refrigerators, and televisions were the focuses of desire and signifiers of social status. During the 1990s, when basic material needs were satisfied for many urban families, their material desires shifted to a search for material upgrading (*shengji*), substituting fancier models for basic ones, international brand names for local products, etc. Since around 2000, the trend in consumption has been a continuous search for the newest models, a desire that is sometimes jokingly (and sometimes seriously) described by the state slogan 'advancing together with the times' (*yushijujin*). However, while the well-to-do urban population is buying novel

commodities and technologies, many poor urban families as well as rural villagers are still leading a subsistence existence and lag many years behind wealthy urban families in terms of material development. Gaps in material conditions and consumption patterns are therefore crucial in producing identity and differentiations between subjects of late socialist China.

Mass Media, the Communist State and the Economic Reform

Mass media are crucial in both the rule of the Chinese Communist state and the process of globalization. Although the penetration of telephone, television, satellite dish or cable service, and VCD players into growing numbers of households marks the astonishing social-technological transformation of China since the 1990s, China is not “progressing” from a remote and media-empty society into a modern and media-saturated one. Mass media was always among the key instruments via which the communist state consolidated power. However, in an effort to serve revolutionary ends by educating and mobilizing the masses, Maoist mass communication suppressed regional and local differences to promote a homogenized “people” and spread the voice of the central government in Beijing. Maoist mass media thus constructed a unique nationwide communist popular culture and produced “the New Chinese Man”. The media changed radically during the 1990s with the availability of new communication technologies, the popularization of foreign-produced media programs, a growing market-orientation, and a corresponding reawakening of cultural differences. The dramatically increased television audience, with viewership increasing from 45 percent of the Chinese population in 1978 to 80 percent of the population in 1995, and 96.58 percent of the

population in 2008,¹ indicates that the popular culture of television has now taken over the central stage in cultural production, a position previously dominated by the state and the elite. Mass media thus play a significant role in providing raw materials for negotiating identities and subjects of consumerism.

Value of Using Multiple Field Sites

To deal with the interesting diversity both within individual cities and between places, this dissertation adopts an experimental approach by applying a strategy involving multiple field sites and key informant groups. This strategy is a response to changing views in anthropology that demand the reconsideration of the meaning of ethnographic field sites in a world witnessing important economic, cultural and political restructuring, particularly increasing migration at the national, regional and global levels as well as increasing social diversity.

Based on examination of multiple field sites, this dissertation follows and is inspired by continuing scholarship on identification and theorization regarding changing notions of community, society, and anthropological field sites (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a; Gupta and Ferguson 1997b; Marcus 1998). The use of multiple field sites is important to this dissertation in two regards. First, in terms of the research subjects, since many of them – urban and rural and rich and poor alike – frequently travel and identify with more than one location, the use of multiple field sites offers a means of approaching

¹ Re: Statistics published on the website of the State Administration of Radio Film and Television of China (<http://www.sarft.gov.cn/>).

their communities in a day-to-day sense. Second, in terms of the topic of interest, namely the impact of globalization in a city – particularly a capital city – it is essential to consider the role of the state in urban transformation. This is particularly the case for a country like China where efforts to join the global economy have been initiated, planned, and supervised by the state, a still powerful communist state. To examine the role of the state, this study situates the subject city within its national context by combining data gathered from multiple sites with different levels of urbanization – i.e., cities, towns, and rural villages. In fact, as globalization is a process that involves not only major cities but also their immediate surrounding areas, small towns, and even remote countryside areas, it is crucial to examine the relationships between a city and the hinterland to which it is connected as a cohesive whole.

Why Beijing

“Why Beijing? Why not Shanghai?” was the question many asked when they learned that my project involved a global city and globalization in China. Mega cities, or places where transnational professionals and worldwide investors assemble, are not the only locations of globalization. Rather, globalization is a process that alters economic, political, social, and cultural structures on a global scale and affects even the remotest villages and the poorest people. Beijing is chosen as the primary study site for this study of the impacts of economic globalization in late socialist China because, as a capital city with a rich history, large size and extraordinary diversity, Beijing is a major node linking socialism and capitalism, China and the world, tradition and modernity, and the state and the nation.

Between Socialism and Capitalism: Beijing is intriguing because it is the capital of a state where a communist party has remained strongly entrenched and yet that has achieved astonishing economic growth during the past 30 years. Beijing is unique in the world in the way socialist bureaucracy and capitalism coexist, communist officials and capitalist investors cooperate closely, and communism and consumerism are both accepted. Indeed, as the political center Beijing is a strategic place for advancing international investment in China – hosting many regional headquarters of transnational firms – because the decentralized but still powerful communist nation-state strongly influences business development in China. Since the transformation of socialist or formerly socialist states is undeniably part of the development of capitalism on a global scale, Beijing offers an excellent window to examine the development of these interrelated processes.

Between China and the World: Most Chinese consider Beijing to be more than just the political and cultural center of China; they also see it as a city central rather than peripheral to the global community. The strong nationwide support for the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing – hosted at the expense of investments elsewhere in the country – offers a typical example of the Chinese desire for global recognition. The successful hosting of this globally significant event is seen as firmly demonstrating China's winning a central position on the world stage. This interpretation is possible because Beijing as the capital city represents China to the outside world. This dissertation does not take Beijing as a representative or a microcosm of China, but rather focuses on how

Beijing –in terms of both its physical reality and how it is imagined – mediates the interesting dynamics among various local, national, and global processes.

Between Tradition and Modernity: A twist on Beijing's position between China and the world is its position between tradition and modernity. Beijing offers a vantage point for examining the dynamics between global processes and local cultural production because it is not only a city rich in culture and history but also one rich in transnational practices, including international business, tourism, immigration, emigration, diplomacy, exhibitions and so on. The goals of Dengist reform were connecting with the world (*yu shijie jiegui*) and modernization (*xiandaihua*). Comparisons between China and the Western world and between pre- and post-reform China are often simplistic and based entirely on the comparison between tradition and modernity. However, as the successor of the unsuccessful westernization project at the beginning of the 20th century and the fanatical Cultural Revolution under Mao, the Dengist Reform and Opening-Up policy inevitably faced a deep anxiety: how to maintain Chinese sovereignty, control and esteem while embracing Western values and systems. Examining how the Chinese government and people manage choices between Chinese and foreign values and old and new urban landscapes reveals how the dynamic relationship between the nation and the world has been dealt with.

Between the State and the Nation: For Chinese, Beijing is the reification of the state. Getting to know Beijing – for example, visiting the city or watching Beijing television programs – is means of imagining and approaching the state. In this sense, Beijing is

unique among Chinese cities for the vast population in that it is a concrete representation of the state that still tangibly impacts their everyday life. Adopting Beijing as my primary research site, the comparison between data collected in the capital and elsewhere in China revealed not only urban hierarchies or urban-rural relationships but also the relationship between the nation and the state.

Why Xi'an

In addition to Beijing, this study adopts Xi'an as its second main focus for field research. Xi'an shares many similarities with Beijing, both being major cities in northern China, famous imperial capitals, and cultural centers. They differ crucially though in that only Beijing is currently the political center. The comparison between these two cities helps clarify the differences in the presence of the state in different cities as well as divergent economic development trajectories.

The Three Key Informant Groups

Key features of global cities include the polarization of income groups and the influx of both professional and laborer migration. Studying the transformation of Beijing in the global economy, one aim of this dissertation is to understand the increasing social complexity of this globalizing city, including the divergent impacts of global processes on various urban groups, and the dynamics between various groups within cities.

Through studying multiple informant groups it is possible to examine the social diversity and complex dynamics among various groups.

The key informant groups considered in this study are as follows: 1) transnational business professionals, namely those working for foreign-invested companies (*waizi qiye*) and including expatriates, overseas Chinese-turned-residents and well educated Chinese business professionals; 2) domestic rural-to-urban migrant laborers; and 3) Old Beijingers (*lao Beijingren*), namely long-standing residents of the old city, who in this study were limited to those still living in the city's traditional *hutong* community (courtyard house neighborhood), conceived as being lower working class families. The comparison among these groups and their lives in the city yields a diverse angle and multi-layer understanding of the effects of and changes resulting from economic reform and globalization. Transnational business professionals and migrant laborers are two newly emergent social groups, whose emergence is closely related to emergent industries and markets resulting from the state policy of urban development and the arrival of global capital. Like migrant laborers, many transnational business professionals are also new immigrants in the city. Meanwhile, as original residents of Beijing, the Old Beijingers contrast with the former two new immigrant groups.

Besides differences in occupation, these three groups are highly differentiated economically. The Old Beijingers, living in traditional hutong communities in the center of the rapidly expanding city, are often poor working class families who lack the resources to leave these old communities that have deteriorated into poverty. Consequently, the three key informant groups occupied different positions in the

emergent new social hierarchy of Beijing, representing a new privileged elite, a poor working class, and a newly marginalized underclass.

For Research on Global Cities and Economic Globalization

This dissertation draws on the literature on world systems (that is, geographical, social, cultural, and economic restructuring resulting from advances in transportation and communication technologies) and particularly on the creation of mega-cities and global cities. Research on global cities has focused on global financial capitals in an effort to examine changing socio-geographic contrasts, from the contrast between developed and developing countries to that between the central and peripheral regions, that transcend national boundaries; issues of strong polarization in income and between occupation groups; divergent development between “inner-city” areas and glamorous business districts; and ethnic issues associated with the arrival of international labor migrants from the south to the north, from formal colonies to the colonizer’s nations, and from poorer countries to rich cities. With its focus on Beijing, this dissertation offers several interesting alternative perspectives on the above areas. First, unlike Euro-American capitalist states, China’s participation in the global economy is characterized by a strong state presence. China currently is not only integrating itself into the global economy, but has also entered a late socialist phase. Second, the labor force crucial to urban development and the establishment of a services industry in Beijing comprises domestic migrants rather than international migrants. Hence, the consequences of labor migration

in Beijing – as well as in other Chinese metropolises – are a growing urban and regional hierarchy, rather than the ethnic issues often associated with international labor migration. The use by this study of multiple key informants is important in two respects: first, in terms of economic globalization, in order to make a comparison between world financial capitals and Beijing; and, second, in terms of the transformation of China, to gain insights into the relationship between the capital city and the countryside.

Synopsis

Chapter 2 attempts to establish a macro historical context and perspective for this dissertation. To achieve this, Chapter 2 examines and details the time of the ethnographic research – i.e., 2000 and 2001 – on which this dissertation is based; and reviews and analyzes the specific macro political and economic conditions of China under communist party rule and the influence of economic globalization. Chapter 2 makes two main arguments. First, it argues that the early 2000s is a critical transitional period from the Dengist Economic Reform and Opening-Up towards a succeeding era of prosperity and global influence epitomized by the staging of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Second, this chapter contends that China in the early 2000s is not only characterized by late socialism but also exhibits features of early capitalism. Specifically, this chapter introduces internal social differentiation and emerging social subjects observed in Beijing and analyzes how hosting the 2008 Olympics reveals and reflects the transformation of Chinese society from external-referencing in the Reform Era to self-referencing during the Olympic Era.

Finally, through an analysis of Deng Xiaoping's Economic Reform and Opening-Up policy and the global politico-economic conditions China has encountered during the early 21st Century, this chapter argues how this dissertation on Beijing demonstrates China's special late socialist conditions of economic globalization. By clarifying the historical, political and economic contexts of China in the early 2000s, this chapter aims to elucidate why internal social differentiation is a key social phenomenon in the study of Anthropology of China. To ensure that the analysis presented in this dissertation reflects Chinese perspectives on "social stratification" this chapter theoretically discusses the differences between two Chinese concepts related to social stratification – *jieji* and *jieceng*.

Chapter 3 focuses on emergent urban stratification within Beijing and examines "contact zones" of economic globalization within the city. This chapter sees Beijing as an aspiring global city – i.e., a rapidly developing metropolis shaped by transnational, state, and local influences – and investigates the making of differences within such a city through consumption practices and patterns. This chapter adapts Mary L. Pratt's 'contact zone' to address the encounters among emerging classes, which include people from different places both within and beyond China, resulting from changing political and economic conditions on both national and global scales. This chapter starts from one such "contact zone": the central Business District, which is the main center of the global economy in Beijing; and ends at another one: the Liulichang Antique Quarter, which contains two worlds – a key international and domestic tourist attraction, and a run-down working class neighborhood. The comparison between these two places not only shows remarkable diversity within a city, but draws upon Saskia Sassen's theory on centrality

and marginality in the global economy, and also illustrates how a single place can contain multiple contrasts between the global and the local.

While addressing emergent urban stratification, this chapter argues that consumption practices are a key aspect of identity production in late socialist China. Although China has witnessed rising consumerism and emerging new urban stratification since the Economic Reform era, social stratification – particularly class – and material well-being are undoubtedly central communist concerns. Thus, this dissertation stresses that consumerism or materialistic culture is not simply a late socialist phenomenon but is also a legacy of the Maoist regime. This chapter examines the concept of consumption in the Chinese context and the impacts of the newly available disposable income since the Economic Reform period, and theorizes regarding the characteristics of late socialist Chinese consumers. Through the focus on differences in consumption practices, this chapter illustrates how economic differentiations led to social differentiations in China at the beginning of the 21st Century.

While Chapter 3 addresses emerging social differences within Beijing, Chapter 4 examines Beijing through perspectives outside of the city and focuses on differences between Beijing and other less privileged or rural places. Chapter 4 locates Beijing in a national context and focuses on its role as the capital. Through the use of mass media and from the perspectives of people “elsewhere,” this chapter examines how Beijing as the capital city is imagined as a site of modernity and wealth. The chapter then addresses China’s urban-rural differences. This chapter starts by juxtaposing and examining three different perspectives on Beijing from people “elsewhere” (i.e., those not occupying the center of the city) in China, including Xi’aners, rural villagers, and lower class Beijing

families living in run-down neighborhoods. This juxtaposition shows that Beijing can be alternatively imagined as the nation, the urban, and the global. For those who do not live in Beijing or enjoy a privileged position in the capital, Beijing as the national center is a critical other for the production of their identities. Through their imagination of the capital, we see how these “outsiders” position themselves and the places where they live. Their self-positioning against the capital reveals an indigenous urban-rural hierarchy.

This chapter examines how Beijing is imagined through the use of mass media by people located elsewhere for two reasons. First, mobility remains a luxury for many Chinese and hence mass media is often the main channel through which they approach the nation-state. Second, from the onset of the communist regime, the communist state designated mass media as a propaganda tool, the “throat and tongue of the party” (*dangdehoushe*), responsible for delivering the state’s perspective and values, and for creating a homogenous subject of the new China. Thus, this chapter reviews anthropologists’ theories regarding the use of mass media for social and cultural production, with specific reference to the policy, history, and use of mass media in China, and presents an argument for how China and Beijing the capital are imagined through the mass media. Subsequently, this chapter examines emergent urban-rural differences (differences between places) in the context of post-reform China via the self-positioning of people in different geographical and social space.

Chapters 3 and 4 address the emerging and growing differences between regions and within cities resulting from the economic and administrative transformations during the reform era. Meanwhile, Chapter 5 argues that migrant laborers are vital in financially and socio-culturally mediating these differences. Following up on the previous two

chapters that highlighted the dichotomy between urban and rural China or isolated Beijing from its regional and national context, this chapter aims to put these differences in context by examining migrant laborers' experiences of living and traveling among various places and socioeconomic settings and as subjects of both the city and the countryside.

Migrant laborers leave their home villages or towns to work as manual laborers in nearby towns, large cities, and metropolitan areas in order to improve the economic situation of their families and seek a better life. Seeking to escape hungry and hopeless lives, rural villagers flock to cities. However, most of them do not leave their poor and rural homes completely. Indeed, they not only return home periodically but also bring back crucial capital, knowledge and connections to stimulate the development and urbanization of villages. Unlike images (Chapter 2) and goods (Chapter 3), which often travel only in a single direction, from cities to the countryside, migrant laborers come and go between cities and villages. I argue that migrant laborers are not merely travelers between villages, towns and cities. Migrant laborers are the people who bring the urban to the rural and the rural to the urban – the mediators between the urban and rural. In an age when urban-rural relations are changing at an unprecedented scale and speed and when city and countryside are simultaneously growing closer together and further apart, migrant laborers are among the few who travel between the two places and have personal contact with people from diverse social hierarchies. Migrant laborers' experiences of both cities and countryside provide a vantage point for reconsidering the meanings of city versus the countryside (*chengxiang*) and urban versus rural.

I propose that migrant laborers are unintentional mediators between privileged urban populations and desperately poor villagers, and among emerging subjects within rapidly transforming cities. As an economically powerless group, indispensable participants in building the global and urban economy, and an urban underclass, migrant laborers provide a vantage point for seeing Beijing in both national and global contexts. At the end of this chapter, I compare the social position of migrant laborers in Beijing and Xi'an to argue that economic factors are crucial in determining the imaginative boundaries of a city, particularly to differentiate insiders from outsiders. Analyzing the experiences and roles of migrant laborers in globalizing Beijing, it is clear that the study of urbanization, global cities and globalization should focus on movements between places from a broad social geographic perspective, rather than focusing on a single or several cities.

In Chapter 6, the conclusion, besides summarizing the dissertation, I discuss a few key themes and developing thoughts which are addressed in this dissertation and considered to be crucial features of Beijing under the influences of changing communist state policy and economic globalization: the importance of social differentiations, multiplication of space and contact zone of economic globalization, migrant laborers as mediators among people and place, and mass media studies and reflection on anthropological field site. Through these discussions, this chapter briefly outlines a few future research directions related to this dissertation.

The Researcher as a “Native Anthropologist”

The interactions, especially power relations, between ethnographers and their informants are crucial influences on ethnographic texts and analysis. At the end of the introduction to the dissertation, I would like to address the issue of my identity as a “native anthropologist.” My peculiar identity certainly affected all the interactions between me and the informants of this study, shaped the perspectives and presumptions of this study, and also helped the dissertation to provide valuable insights during both the field study and writing periods.

A Taiwanese Ethnographer in China and Emerging Chinese Identities

My background as someone who was born and grew up in Taiwan led to this dissertation becoming a study on China, not just Beijing. Being a Taiwanese ethnographer studying China provided me with a peculiar identity as an ethnographer: making me *neither insider nor outsider* in the societies I studied. This ambiguity gave my informants more choices regarding my identity, and by extension theirs. I soon learned that how my informants defined their own identities in relation to mine was highly revealing with regard to their self-positioning, their referencing of communities – whether the world, the nation, or the city or village in which they lived, and the internal differentiations among Chinese.

Soon after settling down in Beijing, I found that one of the very first questions almost everyone – neighbors, taxi drivers, shop owners, salespersons, acquaintances and strangers alike – asked was “where do you come from (*ni cong nar laide*)?” They recognized that I was not a Beijinger through my dress style, accent, and choices of

words. After they confirmed my identity as an outsider of the city, lectures regarding the greatness of the city and friendly advice often followed. Sometimes I hid my Taiwanese identity and pretended that I was a student from southern China. As my “Mainland style Mandarin” improved, most inquirers were satisfied with this answer and accepted me as a new immigrant to the city.

Whether or not I revealed my Taiwanese identity significantly influenced my relationships with informants and acquaintances. The Taiwanese identity is a trigger that inevitably brings to the fore a context for the negotiation of national identity. As soon as people learned that I was Taiwanese, differences in gender, social status, education, etc. between me and them became of minimum importance and the questions they pursued followed the lines of “where are you from” were “where is your family’s native place (*nide laojia shi nar*)?” and “is this the first time you *return home* (*zheshi ni diyici huilai ma*)?” Taiwan typically was not considered a qualified answer to questions regarding my birth place because, as an “overseas Chinese,” I *must* have roots somewhere in mainland China. By referring to my visiting China as “returning home,” they took me for granted as an insider of the nation. After confirming my overseas Chinese identity, another line of questioning frequently involved evaluating the remaining differences in economic development and standards of living between China, Taiwan and the U.S. Through the interpellation of my Taiwanese identity, my interlocutors became national subjects, and through these national subjects, I witnessed the desire of China to “connect with the world (*jiequi*)” and the accompanying dilemmas. On the one hand my interlocutors were eager for the world to move towards and identify with China, yet on

the other hand, they were also eager to become recognized members and active participants of the world.

Due to my initial interest in the use of transnational media and commodities in China, at the beginning of my field research in Beijing I tended to talk to Beijingers in polarized terms that set China apart from the world out there. This perspective was annoying to Beijingers who perceived themselves as members of the global community. In the summer of 2000, I met with Lee at Loft, located in the Sanlitun Bar Street neighborhood and a former warehouse turned restaurant and café designed by an installation artist who had returned to Beijing from New York City. Lee was a director and program developer of the predecessor of CCTV (China Central Television) International. While eating his salad and spaghetti, Lee asked me about my study. I began to explain that I was interested in the use of mass media in China, particularly how Chinese learned about the outside world through television programs. Lee interrupted me angrily at once. “You people (*nimen zhexie ren*) are so arrogant. You always see Chinese as isolated from and ignorant about the world,” he cried. “In fact, I have already made numerous international trips and been to Europe countless times! Why assume that I learn about the world from television?” he finished furiously. Lee made an impressive argument for his qualification as a member of the global community, which was also valued by many other urban professionals. For them, China and Beijing are both parts – and important parts – of the world community.

In contrast to the urban professionals who emphasized that they belonged to a world community, there were also Chinese who cared little about the world community, or even the national community. Heilongtan was a village I visited in Northern Shaanxi

(Shaanbei), notable mainly for a regionally important temple. Unlike busy metropolitan Beijing, in this village, time seemed frozen. There was plenty of time and little to do each day. For the few days I lived in the temple, a group of men would spend the entire day sitting on the steps surrounding the temple courtyard, smoking, chatting and soaking up the sun. Nobody objected when I sat together with them and joined in their conversation. They were curious about how I met Professor Luo Hongguang, the professor who introduced me to this village, but nobody thought to ask me where I was from. Even when I talked about my Taiwanese and U.S. background, no one altered their behavior or displayed any curiosity. “You are Professor Luo’s friend. Professor Luo is one of us (*zijiren*). Thus, you are one of us too,” they explained matter-of-factly. For them the meaningful reference of community was their village, not the nation or the world.

Informed by these research experiences related to my “native anthropologist” identity, I learned, ethnographically, that sense of community and differences, and thus individual social position and identity, are relative. For an anthropologist focusing on social and cultural changes or transformations, it is important to grasp and bear in mind that the diverse perspectives that set informants apart can not be overemphasized. This dissertation attempts to take these diverse perspectives and positions seriously in presenting its arguments.

2

**FROM ECONOMIC REFORM TO HOSTING THE OLYMPICS: CHINESE
STATE POLICY AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY**

This chapter addresses and analyzes the political and economic conditions during the period when the research for this dissertation was conducted, namely the period after 2000. In the early 2000s, China had already achieved the key steps in the Economic Reform and was entering into a new era, and in this context the staging of the 2008 Beijing Olympics represents its grand coming-out party. In this new Olympic Era, China no longer aims to emulate the world, but rather confidently sees itself as occupying center stage in world affairs. With the arrival of this new epoch, Chinese society has transformed from being external-referencing to self-referencing. The tension driving social change is no longer limited to Sino-foreign relations but also includes tensions between privileged and non-privileged groups within China. The state faces crucial decisions about whether it will continue to pursue a socialist direction and attempt to achieve “common prosperity.” The current unique political and economic context makes it interesting and crucial for researchers to examine how increased internal differences have developed, with associated social tensions, and how they will affect the continuing evolution of Chinese society.

Researching a Time of Transition

On July 13, 2001, Juan Antonio Samaranch, the then president of the International Olympic Committee, announced during the Committee's meeting in Moscow that Beijing had defeated Toronto, Paris, Istanbul, and Osaka to win the right to host the 2008 Olympic Games. Jubilant cheering burst out from the Chinese delegation in the auditorium. The Chinese delegates, dressed in red and white, leapt to their feet, raised their arms skywards and embraced one another ecstatically. At the same time, in the middle of the night in Beijing, hundreds of thousands of Chinese watching the live broadcast at Tian'anmen Square and the China Millennium Monument (Zhonghua Shiji Tan) cheered, waved flags and hugged one another in celebration. Fireworks brightened the revelers' faces; a huge screen at the Monument displayed the message "We've Won! (*women yinle!*)," and even president Jiang Zemin joined the jubilant crowd to share the moment.

This was a historic moment – not just for Beijing, but for China. Beijing is a unique place within China; however, as the capital city, Beijing is often assumed to be representative of the nation, including by Chinese officials, Beijingers, foreign observers and even Chinese from elsewhere. The winning by Beijing of the right to host the 2008 Olympic Games provides a typical example of how, when and by whom Beijing is assumed to represent China. As expressed by the mass media, the official rhetoric, and the celebrations of Chinese everywhere, Beijing's moment of triumph is a climax – both symbolically and materially meaningful – marking a transitional period in China from the late 1990s to the early 2000s.

This climactic event occurred only a few days after I completed my main fieldwork for this dissertation and left Beijing, at the end of June 2001. The historical conjuncture of the end of my research and the unveiling of Beijing as the host of the 2008 Olympic Games was coincidental. Nevertheless, the event established new and critical frameworks and perspectives influencing the interpretation of my research – as it did for the Chinese in their continuing negotiation of subjectivities and identities and in their changing perspectives regarding their nation and the world. The research presented in the following chapters was conducted before Beijing was awarded the Olympics. However, this dissertation was certainly conducted during Beijing's long quest for the dream of playing Olympic host. China had aspired to host the Olympics since the 1980s, and Beijing had been bidding for them since 1990. While not a goal of economic reform, hosting the Olympics has from the outset been perceived by China as a trophy that would demonstrate the fulfillment of its economic transformation. With the advantage of hindsight, I now can see that my research was conducted during a transitional period – the eve of a new epoch, marked first by Beijing's successful bid to host the Olympics and, a few months subsequently, by China successfully obtaining full membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO), the dominant international trading institution, at the end of 2001.

Social Differences in Beijing in the Early 2000s

Mixture of Differences

From the beginning of my research, I was fascinated by how, in the vast and densely populated capital city of Beijing, people belonging to socially differentiated groups got along with one another – or not: how they shared physical space while maintaining separate communities and how they literally inhabited different temporalities and spatialities. I think an intriguing aspect of Beijing at this time – during 2000 and 2001 – was the city's amazing diversity – of people, streetscapes, lifestyles, economic patterns, social forms and cultural values. Even more interesting was how these differences coexisted side by side. In Beijing, it is not unusual to see old courtyard house communities and new skyscrapers existing alongside one another in downtown areas; gated residential communities for the rich among suburban peasant villages; trendy private sedans sweeping past plodding mule carts; foreigners and well to do artists living out Oriental fantasies in renovated courtyard houses located within run-down communities inhabited mainly by poor Beijingers at the heart of the ancient capital; professionals from leading world cities and migrant laborers from poor and rural Chinese towns and villages encountering each other as employers and employees and as serviced and servicing parties. I argue that this intriguing and seamless mixture of the old, the renovated, and the emergent is a key characteristic of Beijing in the early 2000s and offers an important perspective for analyzing the transition China was undergoing at that time. The marked disparity among different social groups and their seamless mixture sometimes felt surreal. The view out the window from my desk in Beijing comprised one such surreal vision. Whenever I sat down at night to write research notes and ask myself questions such as “What kind of place is Beijing? What kind of place is Beijing becoming? Who are Beijingers? And what type of a transition is Beijing undergoing?”,

the view out my window constantly reminded me of the varied facets of this evolving city.

My Window View: an Example of Beijing's Mixture of Difference

The apartment where I lived in Beijing was located in Chaoyang district, outside the Fourth Ring Road. The neighborhood of the apartment, benefiting from its strategic location between the center of the city and the suburban international airport, was famous for its larger number of foreign residents. The neighborhood was home to several luxury hotels invested in by international hotel groups; serviced apartments for expatriate families; foreigners' housing complexes (*shewai gongyu*);² an American hospital employing foreign staff and offering services in English; and numerous offices of foreign-invested companies. Foreigner-registered "black license plate" cars (*heipai che*) were a common sight in the neighborhood. Many of the businesses operating in this area – for example, Starbucks, Subway, high end Chinese restaurants, and a big indoor market selling souvenirs, fake luxury brand goods, and reproduction antiques – clearly targeted tourists and foreign residents.

Nevertheless, despite being highly visible, "the foreigner's community" was just one small – at least in terms of numbers of people and buildings – component of this neighborhood in Chaoyang district. In 2000, this area was also typical of areas on the edge of central Beijing that were rapidly developing from villages into suburban quarters

² Shewai Gongyu were established as apartments that only people with foreign passports could legally own or rent. They were part of a housing policy resulting from a desire of the state to control residency and movement of foreigners in China. However, this restrictive housing policy had been loosened up by the time of my research. There were also foreigner-only hotels and shopping complexes.

for relocated institutions and new residential housing complexes.³ Between community complexes could be found vacant lots, areas of luxuriant greenery, and polluted waterways. The apartment I lived in was inside a typical housing complex inhabited by local people. The complex comprised four 24-floor high-rise buildings, each floor of which contained four to eight units. The main entrance of the gated complex was guarded by several *daye* (middle-aged or elderly men) who generally gathered around the gate to chat, and each building in the complex was overseen by a *dajie* (middle-aged woman) who took care of miscellaneous building affairs. The steamed buns sold from the food stand in the yard of the complex cost RMB 0.2 yuan each, compared to RMB 1.6 yuan in nearby four-star hotels. An office of the *Jiedao* (the lowest rank of local government) was located within the complex. During the 2000 Census, all women living alone in the complex were asked to provide the office with records on their migration, marriage and birth-giving. The hallways of the buildings were often in complete darkness because of missing light bulbs.

The view out my window was dominated by a foreigners' garden house complex located immediately across the street from the local apartment complex where I lived. From the eighth floor, I had a good bird's eye view of this complex. The complex comprised three-story townhouses, a few rows of five-story apartments, small gardens surrounding each house and apartment building and a club house containing an indoor pool, gym, business center and restaurants. The complex was walled, guarded, and carefully and professionally maintained. Compared to nearby local high-rise apartments, the houses and apartments in this complex were much bigger, cleaner, and brighter. The beautifully tiled steep roofs, small gardens around each house, guarded entrance gate,

³ Administratively, this area belongs to Beijing's inner suburbs (*jinjiaoqu*).

wide curved driveway lying beyond the gate, uniformed gardeners busily watering the green and foreigners in shorts out jogging provided the scene with an exotic appearance. At night, the place looked even more surreal. While the lights in the nearby neighborhood were sparse, the garden complex became a brightly lit focus of the neighborhood. The rosy-pink buildings and walls were all bathed in a distinctive purple light; the guards at the gate were clearly visible in their dark uniforms and shining buttons; black-licensed sedans quietly entered and left the complex. In a way, the purple-lit complex looked more like a façade than a real residential housing complex. While the complex would have looked out of place in an American suburb owing to its cement construction, densely clustered houses, and extremely small gardens, it was equally out of place in Beijing, where it stood out simply for being so brightly lit and comprising free standing houses with gardens. Often, when I stared down at the complex from my window, I would begin to doubt whether I was really still in Beijing. The complex appeared neither Chinese nor communist. It did not even look modern – postmodern might be a more appropriate description. The purple lit complex resembled an island that could easily have stood within any fast growing city in the developing world. However, at daybreak, ushered in by the hoof beats of mule carts, the nearby complex would appear differently, surrounded by polluted waterways and vacant lots, lost amidst the loud greetings, arguing and honking of the neighborhood, and the Beijing-ness of the view from my window would return.

Only gradually did I realize that the city was undergoing a transition during 2000 and 2001, characterized by a seemingly incompatible mixture of new and old, Chinese and foreign, dilapidating and burgeoning. “What kind of place is Beijing?” Whenever I

asked myself this question, images that flashed through my mind included imperial buildings, run-down courtyard houses, drab and uniform work-unit housing, vast communist monumental buildings, and the conspicuous – though sometimes oddly designed – Western-looking neighborhoods for foreigners and wealthy locals. Fascinated by the diversity and transitional nature of the city, I tried to capture and explore the remaking of Beijing through seeking encounters with socially differentiated inhabitants of the city: the newly arrived versus the native, the local versus the foreign, and the upwardly mobile versus those hopelessly left behind economically.

The Early Rich Theory and Emerging Social and Regional Differences

The most significant social change resulting from the rapid economic reform in China was the elimination of social and institutional egalitarianism and the rapid multiplication of hierarchical social strata. Explaining the strategy of his Economic Reform and Opening-Up project, Deng Xiaoping repeatedly urged that China should “let some people and places (those better able to do so) get rich first, and let the early rich help the later rich to ultimately achieve common prosperity (*rang yibufen [youtiaojiande] ren he difang xian fu qilai, xianfu dai houfu, zuizhong dadao gongtong fuyu*)” (Deng Xiaoping 1993; Deng Xiaoping 1994 (1983)). This Early Rich theory, originally used by Deng to argue that some regions of China, primarily the coastal provinces, enjoyed more suitable conditions for rapid development and that the state should help these regions achieve a head start rather than emphasizing equal development, is the keystone supporting the result of differentiated and uneven regional development. One of the catchphrases of Deng, the theory was soon widely applied to provide an official and theoretical support

for wealth differentiations among people, and thus to legitimize the emergence of a social hierarchy, deeply rooted in control over private wealth and political and cultural resources.⁴

Deng Xiaoping's plan to "let some places and people get rich first" created differences in wealth not only among regions, but also among individuals within each region. The internal social differentiation that emerged as a result then became a new source of competition and tension in everyday life, and is especially perceptible and, hence, crucial, in cities with large populations and great social diversity. As hierarchical social groups emerged in cities, the social hierarchy that Chairman Mao had vowed to eliminate came creeping back. The contradiction between socialist ideals and the goal of eliminating poverty is marked. "Harmonious society (*Hexieshehui*)" and "Problems Involving Agriculture, Peasants, and Rural Villages (*Sannongwenti*)," the signature policies and concerns formulated since 2003 by China's current President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, are focused on resolving problems associated with differences in wealth and particularly rural poverty, thus provide solid evidence of the growing tension among differentiated social groups in 21st Century China.

Tensions were expressed indirectly but unmistakably by the poor and the lower-middle classes in cities. "*Lufendan* (Donkey droppings)," was the mocking comment made by a Beijing taxi driver, who had grown up in a peasant's family in suburban Beijing, as we passed by the business district of Chaoyangmenwai Avenue near the Sanlitun bar street and observed the striking modern urban streetscape and busy suited "white-collar" workers. "Donkey droppings" is a Chinese expression with an

⁴ Anthropologist Amy Hanser, through her examination of interactions between various social groups across the sales counter, also argues that how inequality among people was conceived as differences. For more information, see Hanser (2008).

unspoken tagline: “*biaomianguang* (gleaming surface)”. By using this vulgar metaphor, the driver thus criticized the dazzling city streetscape and the professional people that roamed there for being merely a façade covering a less beautiful reality of the city. His comment indicated that the prosperity of the city was not a reality shared by all of its inhabitants.

On another, slightly earlier, occasion I encountered bitter complaints from another taxi driver. In early spring 2001, I was invited by a college student informant, Yueguang, to visit her parents in Xianyang, an industrial city 25 kilometers from Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi province. Both her parents, who were in their late forties, were laid-off workers of state-owned cotton mills.⁵ The family apartment was within a cotton mill work-unit community comprising rows of identical four-story buildings, their drab appearance made worse by their having become encased in the dense yellowish dirt of the region. While enjoying boiled dumplings that Yueguang's mother made for dinner, we discussed their life during both the Cultural Revolution and the Reform Era. Politely, I suggested that, acquiring a television, washing machine, and a two-room apartment (*erjushi*) during the Reform Era must have improved their lives significantly. Yueguang's father, who went to Shanghai to pursue his revolutionary ideals when he was very young but soon returned to Xianyang to work in the state-owned cotton mill until he was laid off in the 1990s and became a taxi driver, instantly interrupted me: “But, we are the poor now. During the time of Chairman Mao, at least, everyone was equally poor.” Envy is accumulating, driven by a feeling of injustice arising from growing economic and social differences. Nevertheless, class remains a taboo topic in this wildly differentiated society.

⁵ They were not officially laid off. However, they had no more work to do and the factory replaced their original salary with a very small monthly stipend.

Jieji (Class) and Jieceng (Stratification)

Social structure (*shehui jiegou*) and social stratification (*shehui fenceng*) have attracted considerable attention in China since the late 1990s. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) conducted a six-year nationwide study on social stratification and social mobility (*shehui liudong*) during the late 1990s and early 2000s (Lu Xueyi 2002; 2004). Despite the issue of social stratification having attracted considerable attention, *class* remains a highly sensitive topic, mainly because of Mao's legacy. Chinese socialist Li Peilin, in his introduction to research on social stratification of China since the Economic Reform, made clear that zealous and cruel class struggles during the Anti-Rightist Movement and the Cultural Revolution left unforgettable negative impressions, resulting in surveys on social stratification being viewed extremely cautiously by informants (Li Peilin, et al. 2004, 2-3). Class can be translated into two Chinese words: *jieji* and *jieceng*. *Jieji* and *jieceng*, literally meaning step-rank and step-layer, respectively, do not differ significantly in meaning to Chinese-speakers abroad, but to Mainland Chinese they differ crucially. *Jieji* refers to the Marxist and Leninist concept of class, and thus is employed in reference to conflicts between the proletariat (*wuchan jieji*, literally the property-less rank) and the bourgeoisie (*youchan jieji*, literally the propertied rank). The term thus reminds people of the Maoist years of conflict, opposition, hatred and hardship. Consequently, as Li Peilin rightly noted, even in the early 2000s *jieji* remained a provocative term and was carefully avoided. The term *jieceng*, in contrast, does not connote these memories and feelings.

During the early months of my fieldwork, when I mentioned my fascination with the emerging *jieji* within Beijing, my informants, without exception and across different social, economic and educational backgrounds, would instantly become vigilant. On a late summer afternoon in 2000, I was having coffee with Leena, the chief editor of a fashion and health magazine focused on the female white-collar market, and brainstorming together to identify some themes for future issues of the magazine. We talked and enjoyed our Starbucks coffee – which, costing roughly 20 RMB a cup, was an occasional treat for Chinese professionals in Beijing – under the cool shade of the café’s outdoor umbrellas. I said casually that the diverse interests of different *jieji* could be a fun topic. Leena startled. She turned to me with widened eyes and a cautious smile and said: “Do you mean *jieceng* (*ni shi shuo jieceng ba*)?” Around the same time, I met with Professor Dai Jinhua of Peking (Beijing) University. She invited me to meet at the café located inside a nice hotel. The cool and dimly-lit lobby was a completely different world from the hot and dusty streets outside. The high ceiling and golden tone provided a comfortable atmosphere for lingering customers. I introduced my research plan: how I had identified four to five groups and would follow those individuals to observe the lives of various *jieji* in Beijing. Professor Dai stopped puffing on her cigarette instantly, stared at me, and asked directly: “Do you mean *jieceng*?” I felt that even the Che Guevara printed on her shirt was looking at me meaningfully. She went on to explain at length that *jieji* was a very special and sensitive word and I should be careful with its use as to avoid scaring potential informants. *Jieceng* is the preferred term for referring to vertical social difference, whether involving class, status, or some other form of social stratification. *Jieceng* is treated cautiously, particularly by those considered privileged. The provocative

nature of the word *jieji* reveals unresolved conflicts, indicating that internal differentiation will remain a fascinating focus for research on China.

While differentiation in wealth has attracted enormous attention, the definition of *jieceng* is still being negotiated and has not yet achieved a socially accepted consensus. No widely agreed upon classification exists for the emergent social hierarchy in China. Privileged urban groups have developed an emerging class consciousness. In 2000, a must-read for urban white collars (*bailing*), recommended to me by several of my white collar informants, was *Gediao* (Fusai'er 1998), which literally means “style” or “taste” and is the Chinese translation of Paul Fussell’s book *Class: A Guide through the American Status System* (1992 [1983]). While the English version sarcastically addresses inequality in American society by arguing that an American’s class is revealed in everything they do, say and own, for Chinese readers, Fussell’s detailed description and analysis of how privileged Americans behave and shop became a useful “self-help guide” for learning the tastes of the upper class – particularly, the American upper class. However, this emergent sense of class has to be kept secret. The translation of the title of this popular book itself provides a good example of this, using neither *jieji* nor *jieceng*. In the text, the translators also carefully avoided the word “class (*jieceng*)”, replacing it with “rank (*dengji*).” On the other hand, working class families occupying lower social positions do not talk about class too. Despite having concerns regarding their deteriorating social status, poorer people tended to simply comment that they wished to “live a better life (*guo shang hao yidianr de shenghuo*)” rather than expressing a desire to improve their class or social status. That is, they were more concerned with wealth than

class. Thus, for those occupying both the upper and lower levels of the Chinese social hierarchy, social differentiation is an issue that exists but is not yet clearly defined.

Researchers have different ideas regarding China's social stratification and the classification of emergent social groups remains controversial. Chinese sociologist He Qinglian proposed that Chinese society comprises three main strata: the elite, the middle to lower levels, and marginalized groups (He Qinglian 2000). The multi-year nationwide research project conducted by CASS suggested that Chinese society has evolved to comprise ten major social strata, which, from the upper to lower levels, comprise state and social administrators, management personnel, large-scale private business owners and industrialists, specialized technicians, clerks, small business owners, commercial and service industry personnel, industrial workers, agricultural laborers and the unemployed and semi-unemployed. Researchers involved in the CASS project explained that the categories were based primarily on occupational differences, then on the control of each group over organizational, economic and cultural resources (Lu Xueyi 2002, 2).

While “differences in wealth” is a key contributor to the differentiation among *jieceng*, it is certainly not the only source of new classifications. Other key criteria such as occupation, education, and birth-place identity – which are related to but neither determined by nor determinants of economic condition – also play a role. Indeed, various popular terms used to describe diverse social groups in Beijing, including *bailing* (white collar), *fenling* (pink collar), *xiagang gongren* (laid-off worker), *mingong* (migrant laborer) or *nongmingong* (peasant-turned-migrant laborer), and *dagongmei* ([migrant] female wage laborer) all use occupation as the basis for identity. Words such as *mingong*, *nongmingong* and *dagongmei* connote both previous identities as peasants and current

identities as outsiders from, presumably, rural or less developed regions. With the increasing significance of migrant laborers – both in numbers and in terms of the services they provide – in urban society, the marginalized status of such laborers within cities frequently translates into unequal relationships between their homes – villages, counties, small towns and provinces – and the host cities. From this perspective, this study argues that, while *jieceng* is a key term in describing social hierarchy, *jieceng* also reveals – though often unconsciously by Chinese who uses the term – hierarchy between places. Based on the position of migrant laborers within and beyond their host cities, clearly the two forms of differences addressed in this dissertation – differences among people within a place (in this case Beijing) and differences between places – are not only related but, in certain cases, are in fact two aspects of a single issue.

Late Socialist China during an Age of Economic Globalization

This study argues that Chinese state policy and the expansion of global capitalism are the two major forces shaping China's transition from an external-referencing to a self-referencing nation in the early 2000s. To address this transition, this section reviews and examines changing political and economic conditions within and beyond China since the beginning of Dengist Economic Reform. This review and examination aims to establish a critical perspective on both Beijing's internal social differentiations and the city's position in national and transnational contexts, as discussed in the following chapters.

Deng Xiaoping's Reform in Retrospect

Deng Xiaoping's regime, running from the late 1970s to the late 1990s and focusing on economic development, aimed at fulfilling the goals of socialism, not capitalism.

Although Deng Xiaoping and his Reform and Opening-Up (*Gaige Kaifang*) policy are often closely associated with the astonishing speed and magnitude of China's rise as an economic power, it is crucial – and very clear in retrospect – to acknowledge that economic development was from the outset a means or a strategic decision (*zhanlue juece*), designed to realize the goal of establishing a strong socialist nation. To achieve the goal, Deng Xiaoping and his supporters shifted the focus of the nation from political struggle to economic development. While the new course adopted by Deng Xiaoping since 1978 was often referred to in short as the Reform policy, with China under his rule being labeled Reform China or China in the Reform Era, his plan actually comprised two key components: reform (*gaige*) and opening up (*kaifang*).⁶

The reform policy was focused on establishing a market economy to replace a centrally planned economy. The Opening-Up Policy – or more precisely, the policy of Opening Up to the Outside World (*duiwai kaifang*) – aimed to change China's economic system from being closed and self-contained to being open to foreign markets and investment. The Dengist Reform originated from the rural reform (*nongcun gaige*) in 1978, which aimed to institutionalize the Household Responsibility System (*Jiating Lianchan Chengbao Zerenzhi*) and establish the Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs). The Household Responsibility System redistributes responsibility and

⁶ The Reform and Opening-Up policy was formally announced during the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC in December 1978 in Beijing.

management of rural productivity from collective communes to families, while the Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs) permit rural residents and communities to experiment with making money and market operations. Subsequently, since 1984, the Reform campaign initiated urban reform, which focused on loosening controls and even privatizing state enterprises. Meanwhile, the policy of Opening-Up allowed designated cities and areas to be involved in international trade and foreign investment. Specifically, the central government lifted various prohibitions and restrictions on exports and foreign investment, and issued special administrative regulations and tariff exemptions to encourage international business activities and free flows of capital and advanced technologies in these cities and areas. The Opening-Up process was gradual – beginning with the establishment of four Special Economic Zones (i.e., Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Xiamen, and Shantou – all four of which were cities on the southeast coast) in 1980, followed by the opening up of more coastal cities in 1984, then the opening up of provincial capitals and major inland cities in the late 1980s. From the early 1990s, districts of high and advanced technologies (*gaoxinjishuqu*) were established in large and medium-sized cities across China to solicit investment from high-tech companies based in more developed coastal cities or overseas. In the early 2000s, even though the nation never officially announced that it had completed the process of “opening up”, the circulation and exchange of capital, people, technology, and business know-how – except in a few industries such as finance and media production – is no longer aggressively controlled by the state. While the distinction between an opening place and a closed one is no longer critical, the differentiations in economic development resulting from the state-controlled Opening-Up Policy have created a new interurban and regional hierarchy within China.

In his Addresses during the 1992 Inspection Tour to South China (*Nanxun Jianghua* or *Nanfang Tanhua*) – which marked virtually his last major statement on China’s Reform and Opening-Up, Deng Xiaoping discussed whether China’s Economic Reform was capitalist or socialist in nature. Deng contended that “the essence of socialism is liberating and developing productivity, eliminating exploitation and polarization, and ultimately achieving common prosperity (*jiefang shengchanli, fazhan shengchanli, xiaomie boxue, xiaochu liangji fenhua, zuizong dadao gongtong fuyu*)” (Deng Xiaoping 1993). He asserted that China’s Reform and Opening-Up were a means of liberating productivity, and were intended to eliminate exploitation and polarization. Consequently, China’s Reform and Opening-Up is socialist, not capitalist, in nature. Beginning his project from Rural Reform, Deng Xiaoping believed that an agricultural surplus would facilitate industrial development, and this belief was borne out during the mid 1980s. However, notwithstanding Deng’s plan and stated intentions, China’s economic development resulted in increased exploitation and social polarization. Wealth gaps emerged as a key problem during the 1990s, and grew into an urgent social issue during the early 2000s. During the period of Reform, the objective of pursuing economic development was largely conceived in terms of attracting and accumulating private capital. The second half of Deng’s Early Rich plan – i.e., “let the early rich help the later rich to ultimately achieve common prosperity,” remained largely unrealized 30 years after the initiation of the Dengist reform project (Deng Xiaoping 1993; 1994 (1983)).

Since the start of the Reform Era, China has witnessed significant economic growth, improving living standards and a growing share of – and increasing influence in – the world market. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China, compared to

the start of the Reform era, national GDP has increased by 57 times (from RMB 364.5 billion in 1978 to RMB 20940.7 billion in 2006) while per capita GDP has grown by almost 37 times (from RMB 381 in 1978 to RMB 14040 in 2005).⁷ Regarding growth in international trade, the total value of imports and exports for China has grown by almost 69 times (from USD 20.6 billion in 1978 to USD 1421.9 billion in 2005). According to research by the World Bank, the GDP of China increased from USD 295.7 billion in 1986, to USD 856.1 billion in 1996, and to USD 2644.7 billion in 2006, representing 10.1% average annual growth from 1986 to 1996 and 9.0% average annual growth from 1996 to 2006. Furthermore, China's total exports of goods and services increased from USD 35 billion in 1986, to USD 171.7 billion in 1996, and to USD 1061.7 billion in 2006; and China's total net imports of goods and services increased from USD 43.5 billion in 1986, to USD 154.1 billion in 1996, to USD 852.8 billion in 2006. The rapid increase of China's exports of goods and services per unit of GDP from 11.8% in 1986 to 40.1% in 2006 indicates the rapidly growing mutual dependency between China and the world market.⁸

The original goal of the Dengist Reform of establishing a socialist power is often eclipsed by its impressive achievements in economic development. The unprecedented economic achievements have been the signature of China's transformation – or “rise” – in recent decades and are often taken by people within and beyond China as the goal of Dengist Reform. Dengist Reform was not about adjusting or abandoning socialism, nor was it about adopting capitalism. Nevertheless, capitalist cultural values did arrive with the development of markets and consumerism; and, despite not being desired by the

⁷ Re: Yearbooks and census data published by the National Bureau of Statistics of China (<http://www.stats.gov.cn/>).

⁸ Re: Statistics of the World Bank (http://devdata.worldbank.org/AAG/chn_aag.pdf).

Communist leadership, the development of a market economy – even a “socialist market economy” – resulted in social polarization.

Encounter of Late Socialism and Early Capitalism

Reviewing the background, initial ideas, turns and consequences of Deng Xiaoping’s Reform and Opening-Up policy and practices, I hope to demonstrate two simple but frequently overlooked points. First, the development of the Chinese market economy since the last quarter of the twentieth century has been initiated, planned, and controlled by the communist state. The development of a market economy is thus a means to fulfill socialist objectives. Despite debates during the Dengist Economic Reform and the best means of achieving the ideal of socialism remaining an open question, to date the communist state has shown no intention of modifying its socialist goals. Second, China has not yet entered a post-socialist period. The fact that China is an increasingly important player in the world economy and controls a growing share of global markets does not conflict with its being a socialist state. Instead of labeling China a post-socialist nation, as many scholars have done, I argue that it is more appropriate and theoretically more productive to refer to China as being in a *late socialist* stage. Li Zhang prefers the term late socialist to post-socialist for characterizing China’s transformation since the late 1970s to stress that “... the one-party Communist political system continues to dominate (Zhang 2001, 217)” and to resist the assumption that China’s transformation resulting from Reform and Opening-Up will definitely lead to the end of socialism (208). I favor the term late socialist over post-socialist for similar reasons to Zhang. Although the periodization of a socio-economic system is inevitably controversial, characterizing

China as late socialist helps in maintaining constant vigilance against the temptation of seeing China, with its rapidly expanding domestic and international markets, as a capitalist society, keeping attention focused on the actions of the communist state, and leaving the question of the fate of socialism in China open. The “lateness,” on the other hand, suggests that socialism could be another transient stage in China’s history rather than a constant.

Capitalism is an economic system – a mode of production – focused on the accumulation of private wealth. Since many scholars and business professionals used the term “late-capitalist” to address transformations in the economic structure of dominant economies since the later part of the twentieth century, it is easy to wrongly assume that late-capitalist is a characteristic of a specific period, rather than being a specific mode of production, leading to the mistaken assumption that capitalism is evenly developed around the world or that the late-capitalist mode of production is *the* shared economic characteristic of all world economies. At least, the late capitalist mode of production is not the mainstream in China, which is the fourth largest economy in the world in terms of GDP in 2006.⁹ As this dissertation examines the impact of social differentiations within China, which are shaped by both the communist state and the global economy, it argues that, focusing on the influence of the global economy, it is important to start from the fact that the capitalist mode of production is unevenly developed both around the world and within nation-states, and particularly in the case of nations like China that are large in both geographical and population terms. Indeed, unevenness is a necessary condition for the operation of global capitalism; that is, while some become the financiers or the capitalists, others must serve as the laborers.

⁹ Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, October 2007.

Late capitalism is a mode of production characterized by the central position of financial capital and industry, intensive flows of financial capital beyond national boundaries, dependence on information technology, loosening up of state regulations regarding market practices – the laissez-faire or the neoliberal tendency, decentralization of economic institutions, and increasing concentration of financial capital in limited numbers of firms and cities – if not districts or streets (re: Mandel 1978). While late capitalist features adequately describe the transformations in economic structures experienced by other leading global economies – i.e. the United States, Japan, Germany, United Kingdom, France, etc. since the 1970s – roughly the same period as Deng’s Economic Reform, these features did not describe the case of China, not even during the first years of the 2000s. China is a new world power but it is also a newly industrialized country.

When China initiated the Economic Reform project, from the perspectives of global financiers and investors, China was both an undeveloped market and a place with almost inexhaustible supply of cheap labor. China achieved the first steps of the Dengist Economic Reform, which involved liberating productivity and accumulating wealth, and became one of the leading world economies mainly by being “the factory of the world.” “Made in China” consumer goods have become part of everyday reality for people around the world during the last few decades. In 2006, China’s exports totaled USD 969.1 billion, of which manufactures accounted for USD 916.1 billion, or 95%.¹⁰ As the major manufacturing nation in the world, land was hastily transferred for industrial use, natural resources were rapidly exploited, and substantial numbers of “surplus” laborers flocked from the countryside to the cities to join the global labor market. Indeed, the

¹⁰ Data Source: Word Bank, China at a glance.

Dengist Economic Reform and Opening-Up to the world market resulted in a Chinese economic system characterized by rapid industrialization (particularly light industry and the manufacture of consumer goods), rapid growth in labor-intensive jobs, an export-driven economy, increasing reliance on international trade, and strong state regulations and protection. Notably, these features strongly resemble an *early capitalist* mode of production. Owing to late capitalist economies and giant multinational corporations seeking cheaper labor, late socialist China developed an early capitalist economic mode, which, in spite of Deng Xiaoping's socialist goal of accumulating "collective wealth," resulted in a nation that, while richer, had increased social and economic differentiation. China has become a unique world power which is "at once rich (in aggregate terms) and poor (in per capita terms)".¹¹ Internal differentiation became acute during the second half of the 1990s, and at the time of my research in 2000 and 2001 could not be ignored as the socio-economic structure upon which the current Olympic China was built.

Internal differentiation resulting from late socialist governmentality and an early capitalist mode of production is the key theme of the dissertation addressed in the following chapters. I want to make a further note regarding the issue of internal differences, and specifically denaturalizing the unit of analysis, namely nation-states, used in the above arguments. A main concern of mine is the use of nation-states as the unit for understanding economies, thus perpetuating the idea that the majority of inhabitants of rich developed nations are financiers or capitalists, while the majority in newly industrialized or developing nations are laborers. Even in the most advanced

¹¹ Quoted from *The Rise of a Fierce Yet Fragile Superpower*, in the January 7, 2008 issue of Newsweek (Re: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/81588>)

economies, the so-called late capitalist mode of production, focused on international flow and accumulation of capital, is the way only a small group of people – generally residing in major cities – make their living. Hence, rather than arguing that the late-capitalist mode of production is a characteristic of a country, it is more appropriate to say that it is the dominant mode of production of a metropolitan city. Additionally, instead of saying that the mode of production describes a place, such as a metropolis, it is probably more accurate to say that it describes a group of people. Moreover, the above is true for all nation-states, whether developed, developing, or underdeveloped. Recognizing how the late-capitalist mode of production is operated by an extremely small number of people yet directly or indirectly shapes the lives of almost everyone is critical in further examining the issue of internal differences.

The Late Socialist Conditions of Economic Globalization

Exploring Dengist socialist ideals and practices and the development of the global economy within and beyond China, I propose that the practices of economic globalization encountered distinct conditions in late socialist China. The following focuses on three conditions of economic globalization in late socialist China.

First, the late socialist condition of economic globalization is characterized by a strong government, which is different from the neoliberal trends witnessed with late capitalism in the handful of global economic centers. Despite having almost opposite intentions, with the former aims to achieve collective wealth, while the latter aiming to concentrate wealth in the hands of a few mega multinational corporations, the Chinese late socialist state and investors and developers representing the capitalist global market

cooperated together highly successfully. The late socialist state's strong desire to join the global market and to encourage economic development via industrialization closely matched the needs of the market and global businessmen seeking cheap labor. With its monopolized control over policy making and national resource distribution, China's late socialist government offered an extremely high level of support for international corporations seeking offshore manufacturing. For example, the policy of supporting the development of Township and Village Enterprises created small scale manufacturers producing cheap consumer goods for the global market while transforming China's rural economy (re: Friedmann 2005; Oi 1999), and the establishment of Special Economic Zones in the South opened up large offshore manufacturing centers for international investors while allowing China to experiment with a surge of export-driven urbanization.

Nevertheless, even though global investors and China's late socialist state appeared mutually complementary, the divergence in interests between them remains important and is, I argue, the most intriguing characteristic of China's economic globalization. As China achieved significant economic growth, the focus of the state shifted from wealth *production* to wealth *distribution* – i.e., how to achieve the later part of Deng Xiaoping's famous call: "let the early rich help the later rich to ultimately achieve common prosperity." This shift of focus – and pressure – from "production" to "distribution" emerged as China accumulated "enough" wealth, and characterizes the transition of China in the early 2000s. "How much wealth is enough" is more a social and psychological question than a statistical and economic one. I suggest that joining WTO and Beijing's hosting the Olympics are symbolically and materially meaningful events marking the social and psychological turning point in the nation's pursuit of success and

wealth. However, it remains unclear what goals and whose goals – i.e. those of global investors or economically disadvantaged Chinese – the government will emphasize and support in the future. After a couple of decades of interlinked development of domestic and global markets, tension exists not just between foreign and national economies but also between “the early rich” and “the later rich.”

The second distinctive condition of China’s late socialist economic globalization is that its economic development is heavily reliant on an early capitalist mode of production. As I argued above, employing an early capitalist mode of production as the main component of the Chinese economy means that, first, China is undergoing rapid industrialization; and second, a significant portion of the population contribute to the national economy by offering their labor. China’s dependence on its national labor force and on industrialization reveals a critical difference between China and other world powers: the majority of the population is still not rich and the standard of living – particularly in terms of the environment – is poor. According to the IMF, in 2006, China’s GDP per capita ranked 107th among 179 sovereign states measured, while national GDP ranked 4th.¹² Although nations with large population tend to have large GDPs, China’s significant lag in these two rankings demonstrates that while the nation is rich, the population mostly remains poor. Since China is a socialist state ruled by a single party, the state has stronger control over total national wealth than is the case for most nations. On the one hand, this strong control over a large proportion of national wealth and resources places the state in a stronger position to fulfill its ambition of becoming a critical player in the global economy, it also offers China greater potential than most nations to reduce the current unequal distribution of wealth.

¹² Source: IMF, World Economic Outlook, April 2007 and October 2007.

The third distinctive late socialist condition related to economic globalization is that a large number of the national population, particularly in poorer places, remains estranged from the world market. An examination of how people make their living in China in the face of economic globalization will reveal this fact. Joining the world market as “the factory of the world”, China accounts for a huge share of the world’s labor force. While the number of Chinese living as urban laborers steadily increased since the late 1970s, over half of the Chinese labor force remains on the land. In 2006, roughly 70% of China’s population – or 900 million people – still depended on agriculture to make a living.¹³ Although the number of peasants remains very large, agriculture contributes only minimally to China’s economy, and Chinese agricultural produce is traded relatively little on global markets. In 2006, agriculture accounted for just 11.7% of China’s GDP and food comprised less than 3 % of China’s total exports.¹⁴ In other words, the production activity of large numbers of Chinese, far greater than the numbers producing for the international market, is only slightly and indirectly related to the global market. These figures demonstrate something not shown by China’s impressive GDP growth, the landscapes of its advanced metropolises, and the spectacle presented at its Olympics. Recognizing that a significant proportion of the population remains on the land and only marginally involved, in terms of both production and consumption, in the world market, it is possible to better understand how China’s state policy of joining the

¹³ Statistics on the agricultural population of China differ considerably among sources. This study adopted the figures reported by China’s official news agency, Xinhua News, identifying roughly 900 millions peasants in China. Considering that reducing the agricultural population is a stated national goal, the official news agency is highly unlikely to provide an inflated estimate of this figure. Re: http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2004-03/04/content_1345454.htm

¹⁴ Sources: various data from both the *Country at a Glance Database* of the World Bank and the China Statistical Yearbook of the State Statistical Bureau of China.

world market and the expansion of global markets in China have contributed to the increased social inequality and differentiation in China.

The Olympic Era: A New Self-referencing Epoch

Based on growing social diversity resulting from more than two decades of economic Reform and Opening-Up, a new era – which I call the Olympic Era – was unfolding in China during the early 2000s. While the Reform Era initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 was unquestionably an influential period in the recent history of China, as the nation ecstatically celebrated its Olympics and WTO successes both occurring in 2001, the Reform Era appeared to have ended and been replaced by a transitional era leading from a past of material scarcity to a future of material abundance, and from a closed communist state to the emergence of a new world power. One notable feature of the Olympic Era is that China is transforming from a society looking back and outwards to one looking forwards and inwards.

A Flourishing Age (Shengshi)

The Olympic Era emerged following a very transitional period in the early 2000s, and remains theoretical, lacking a well-defined or agreed upon name. Nevertheless, the social changes I observed during my one and half years of field research, as well as my contacts with informants and literature research during subsequent years support my belief that

treating the 2000s as a fundamentally different period from the late 1990s will be productive for research on China.

Despite not being well-recognized or defined, the fading away of “reform consciousness” and the emergence of a new era has been marked by discursive and material traces. Just before Chinese New Year of 2003, Zhang Yan, a doctor who lives in Xi’an, sent me a seasonal greetings card. The bright red card was decorated with golden peonies and below the flowers was text, also in gold, reading: “At a flourishing age in the prime of one’s life (*Sui dang shengshi, ren feng huanian*).” Golden and red colors and peonies are common motifs in Chinese holiday celebrations good luck wishes. The line on the card congratulates the recipient for living prosperously through the best years of their life. The card is a popular one and can easily be found in the shops. However, my attention was instantly caught by the term “a flourishing age (*shengshi*).” A flourishing age, is traditionally used to describe a few historical periods during which China enjoyed prosperity and unrivaled military power. Although the verse expressed a traditional Chinese wish, I believe that the choice of this verse – by the greeting card publishers, the vendors, and my informant – was not simply a reflection of conventional custom; rather, this card can be read as a confident statement by Mainland Chinese citizens praising both the age in which they live and their society. This confidence in China was not exhibited by my informants when I conducted my pilot research in 1997, nor did I experience it during my main field research from 2000 to 2001.

Interested in this newly witnessed confidence, I carefully observed if, when and how the term *shengshi* appeared in the mainstream media by tracking news, mass media coverage and other published material. My efforts confirmed that the idea of living in “a

flourishing age” was not merely an empty or conventional wish but a shared idea in China. The idea that China was entering a new shengshi was extremely popular in the mass media and appearing in advertisements during 2003 and 2004. There were discussions regarding how in this newly arrived flourishing age, Chinese were simultaneously confident and anxious (*fuzao*). Social scientists, economists and cultural critics debated whether China should be celebratory or cautious about the arrival of a new shengshi. Supporters of the idea that China had entered a shengshi based their arguments primarily on statistics demonstrating impressive economic growth during recent decades. Meanwhile, opponents argued that, behind China’s strong economic growth, lay serious inequalities, and moreover they stated that a true shengshi or world power should be based on more than economic prosperity. Some critics suggested that indexes used to calculate economic growth in capitalist societies may be inappropriate for China, whose “market economy” is focused on developing a socialist society.

Although whether China is experiencing another shengshi remains controversial, there is no doubt that China now is significantly different from the 1980s and the 1990s in terms of economic development and national confidence. The first questions well-educated and socially-privileged Chinese were interested in learning from overseas Chinese like myself in 1997, 2000 and 2001 were “what is the economic level (*jingji shuiping*) in Taipei?” “How many middle-class (*zhongchan jieji*) people are there in New York City?” “How far does China lag behind the U.S.?” When I met my informants in Sydney and Taipei in 2003 and 2005, they no longer asked such questions; rather than self-defensively calculating how far China lagged behind better developed countries, they

could appreciate and assess the strengths and weaknesses of both China and the outside world.

Television programs also reflect the popular imagination and discourse regarding shengshi. At the end of 2006, CCTV-2, the economics channels of the central state television stations, produced and aired a 12-episode documentary titled “The Rise of Great Nations (*Daguo Jueqi*)”, which reviewed the history of how nine countries became great powers on the world stage. The nine countries reviewed were, in turn, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, Russia (including the Soviet Union) and the United States. The documentary was one of the most successful mass media programs in 2006 and 2007 and was extremely influential both in China and in overseas Chinese communities. The program was interpreted as providing guidance regarding how China should proceed in order to become a great power. One such interpretation was the comment on the series made by Dr. Jianmin Wu, the president of China Foreign Affairs University: “this work is particularly meaningful for China now because China is at a time where its next step is uncertain (*Zhongguo zheng chuzai yige zenmebande shijianduan li*)”.¹⁵

“The Rise of Great Nations” can be better understood by comparing it with earlier highly successful media products. In mid 1988, CCTV produced and aired a wildly popular and influential politico-historical program: River Elegy (*Heshang*). While the Rise of Great Nations stressed economic developments and stimulated debate about how China should become a world power with global influence, River Elegy stressed cultural aspects and criticized China’s politics and traditional cultural values. According to

¹⁵ Wu is one of the experts CCTV-2 invited to make comments on this documentary as a way of advertising the program, see: <http://finance.cctv.com/special/C16860/20061127/101692.shtml>.

CCTV's statistics, *River Elegy* was viewed by an audience of more than two hundred million, despite being banned by the state in 1989, just one year after its airing. Another extremely successful mass media product was *China That Can Say No*, a bestseller published in 1996 and later translated into multiple languages. The book, subtitled *Political and Emotional Choices in the Post Cold-War Era*, criticized popular admiration of Western and particularly American cultures and values. While some consider the work a major advocate of Chinese nationalism, other insiders argue that the main motivation of the authors in publishing the book was simply to make money – i.e. nationalism sold well in the mid 1990s. The successes of *River Elegy* in the 1980s, *China That Can Say No* in the 1990s, and the *Rise of Great Nations* in the 2000s indicates various self-images of China, from self-critical to nationalistic, and finally a mixture of ambition and caution regarding becoming a global power. The popularity of the *Rise of Great Nations* also firmly demonstrates that China has entered a new time that is fundamentally different from the Reform Era.

I have been wondering about the most appropriate name for the new era that emerged in the 21st Century. Initially, I considered the label “Late-Reform”, since the phrase “insist on the Reform and Opening-Up (*jianchi Gaige Kaifang*)” continues to be frequently repeated by the current national leaders.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the 2000s differ fundamentally from the 1990s. The new era is clearly characterized by a new self image among the Chinese, particularly in their relations with the external world. Thus, a new name that emphasizes this new self image is appropriate. What does *shengshi* mean in the early 2000s? What lies behind the *shengshi* idea? While *shengshi* can imply various

¹⁶ The term *Gaige Kaifang* has frequently been mentioned particularly since the beginning of 2008 because this year marks the thirtieth year of Economic Reform and various celebratory projects are underway.

things, including a strong economy and improved living standards, in the 2000s, shengshi means, above all else, occupying a position *at the center of the world stage*. The introduction of the Rise of Great Nations on the CCTV official sites clearly states that the term Great Nation refers not to population or geographic size but to historical influence. This explanation confirms that possible sources of global influence lie at the center of what this documentary – and by extension China – are interested in. Reform consciousness is fading and a new era has begun because China is no longer a laggard striving to catch up with more developed countries but rather is a country confidently occupying a central position in the global community. Considering this central feature, I propose the Olympic Era as an appropriate term.

Olympic Era

When Beijing stages the Olympics, China steps onto the world stage. This sentiment expresses the importance of the Olympic Games to China. From the Chinese perspective the Olympic Games is a great *Western* tradition that originated in classical Greece, and thus China's hosting of the games means China has been entrusted to hold one of the grand ceremonies of *the West*. The Beijing Olympics is interpreted by the Chinese as an encounter between the East and the West, with China playing the role not of a guest but of a generous and capable host.

The cover story of *Liaowan (Outlook)*, a news magazine published by China's official Xinhua News Agency, at the beginning of 2008 was "China's Olympic Year (*Zhongguo Aolinpike Nian*)."¹⁷ This report defined the Beijing Olympic Games as the "Monument to China's Reform and Opening-Up (*Zhongguo gaige Kaifang Jinianbei*)".

¹⁷ The report is available online, re: <http://news.sohu.com/20080107/n254497864.shtml>.

The report begins by presenting an interview in which Jane Macartney talks about the Beijing Olympics. Jane Macartney is a senior journalist working for the Times in China and a descendant of the famous Envoy of Britain to China in 1793 – Earl George Macartney. She has been living in China for almost 30 years, that is, since the earliest years of the Economic Reform. The choice of interviewee subject thus paints Emperor Qinglong's refusal of the requests of Earl Macartney in 1793 (i.e., to relax restrictions on trade between China and Britain) as the moment when China shut her door to the outside world and Deng Xiaoping's Reform and Opening-Up since 1978 as a long-awaited re-opening of China. By extension, Beijing's hosting of the Olympic Games is portrayed as a beginning of a brand new stage in the relationship between China and the West, with China finally proving itself to be the equal of the West, and making up for an opportunity that Emperor Qinglong missed two centuries previously. This is one of the many typical examples demonstrating how state officials interpret and present the meaning of the Beijing Olympics through the mass media. A key catchphrase of the Reform and Opening-Up Era was "walking towards the world (*zouxiang shijie*).” Hosting the Beijing Olympics, China has passed the phase of “walking towards the world” and occupied a position at the center of the global stage.

One reason that cities seek to host the Olympic Games is the possible economic benefits and urban development prospect associated with hosting the event. Beijing is no exception. The 2008 Olympic Games offers an unparalleled opportunity to boost the development of Beijing. Hosting the Olympic Games has attracted to Beijing vast quantities of domestic and international investment, as well as talent and professionals from around the world. With these resources pouring into the city, the building of games

venues, the construction of urban infrastructure supporting the Olympics, and the implementation of related urban redevelopment projects made possible by the event are all helping to upgrade the built environment of the city. The potential markets created by staging the Olympic Games –particularly in cultural industry, tourism, sports industry, telecommunication, and advertising – bring significant income to the city as a whole. In the long run, the reputation earned through the successful hosting of the Games is expected to contribute lasting economic benefits for Beijing. Nevertheless, while recognizing the various realized and potential benefits in terms of economic and urban development within and beyond Beijing, I believe that, the symbolic meaning of the Games as a long-awaited coming-out party for China to take a place on the center stage of world affairs is far more important.¹⁸

For the Chinese, staging the Olympic Games is both a national and a nationalist endeavor. Unlike the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984, which was run by a private organizing committee, the Beijing Olympics have been supported and operated entirely by the municipal and central state government. China's official media have noted approvingly that China has been “employing the strength of the entire country (*qing juguo zhili*)” to support the Games. Since the “strength of the entire country” referred to here is that of a powerful communist state, vast quantities of money and resources have been invested.¹⁹ State support for the event is so strong that critics believe the event must

¹⁸ The description is borrowed from the report “The Rise of a Fierce Yet Fragile Superpower” dealing with China and published in the January 7, 2008 issue of Newsweek (re: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/81588>).

¹⁹ The officials of the Organizing Committee of the Beijing Olympics said in 2007 that the budget for the Games would be up to USD 2 billion (Re: <http://www.beijing2008.cn/news/official/preparation/n214179993.shtml>). Moreover, a study of the economy of Beijing Olympics financed by the Beijing Municipal Government estimated Olympics related investment between 2002 and 2008 at around USD 35 billion (Re: http://www.bjpopss.gov.cn/asp_xxgl_400/ReadPJI.asp?ID=829). An accurate estimate is difficult to obtain partly because of the relatively closed nature of the Communist administrative system.

take precedence over the needs of disadvantaged regions and groups. The Olympic Games was unreservedly endorsed by the state government because, from the onset, it was designed as a statement about China. Recognizing the significant differences between Beijing and the rest of China and also the city's unique character even in comparison to other first-tier Chinese metropolises, this study suggests that in Olympic-related discourses and imagery, Beijing and China are inseparable and interchangeable. The communist mass media have ensured that the images, slogans and stories associated with the Olympics are carried to every corner of the country used to mobilize as much of the population as possible to become involved in the event. One example of how the government has tried to achieve this is the "Support the Beijing Olympics (*Zhichi Beijing Shen'ao*)" campaign, which has been resolutely encouraged and implemented by all levels of government and carried throughout China and also in overseas Chinese communities in the spring of 2001, namely in the months before the host city for the 2008 Olympics was decided. The Beijing Olympics thus is in every sense a national event.

From External-Referencing to Self-Referencing

Besides taking a central place on the world stage, a key characteristic of the Olympic Era is a transition from being external-referencing to self-referencing. Unlike the Reform Era, when the catchphrase is "*yu shijie jiegui* (linking tracks with the world)" or, in shortened form, "*Jiegui* (linking tracks)," during the Olympic Era, China no longer evaluates its own development by comparing itself, especially in terms of economic data, with developed foreign countries. Instead, China has begun to see itself as a superpower and

shifted its attention to how to manage its leading international role. Common people and policy makers alike are contemplating and reflecting on the nation's future more through the current situation and potential of China than through the situation of other developed nations. A good demonstration of this emerging self-referencing mindset is the new slogan “*Yushijujin* (advancing together with the times),” introduced by former President Jiang Zeming in 2001. From “linking tracks with the international world” to “advancing together with the times,” China has changed from looking backwards, via a national focus on what China had missed and lacked, to looking forwards, as reflected in the aspiration to be a frontrunner in every aspect of human development.

Jiegui (linking tracks), the signature slogan of the Reform Era, literally refers to linking two previously disconnected tracks. The term originated simultaneously with the Opening-Up Policy in the late 1970s. Deng Xiaoping and his reformist colleagues, arguing against the Closed Door policy of Mao Zedong, advocated that China opened up to the outside world in order to accelerate its economic development, which specifically meant rejoining the world market and community and encouraging international exchange of goods, talent, capital, technology and management methods. In this context of Opening-Up, Deng Xiaoping used the term *yu shijie jiegui* (linking tracks with the world) to encourage participation in international institutions, adopting of international conventions and laws, and becoming more active in international affairs.

More generally, the term *jiegui* emphasizes links and contacts between China and other countries. The slogan represents an effort to correct the belief from the Cultural Revolution (‘*sixiang shang de boluanfanzheng*’) that all foreign people, ideas, and things were evil; that being rich or pursuing wealth was immoral and anti-communist; and that

intellectuals and scientists were to be persecuted.²⁰ Since the Cultural Revolution was an era of self-isolation with disastrous consequences for China and, as Deng Xiaoping emphasized, betraying the socialist goal of creating a materially abundant society, the goals of the Reform Era should be achieved through reinstating international contacts and connections.

Although Deng's reformists used the term *jiegui* highly specifically, through frequent repetition and rhetorical use, *jiegui* was soon applied to economic, cultural, social, and commercial domains where differences were identified between China and foreign societies. The term is freely applied to appreciate the value of foreign talent, experience, knowledge, capital, and technology; and is also applied to criticize resistance to change. *Jiegui* is frequently used to appeal for equalizing differences between China and foreign countries, regardless of the nature of the difference, for example in legal system, living standards, urban design, agricultural technologies or national education, or even in highly specific areas such as airport security, office stationary, cosmetics or toilet maintenance in fast food stores. Besides its original focus on links between China and the external world, *jiegui* later began to be used in reference to domestic development gaps. For example, commentators talked of rural China struggling to *jiegui* with urban China (i.e. urbanization), of the Shenzhen and Zhuhai Special Economic Zones attempting to *jiegui* with Hong Kong and Macau, and the towns surrounding Shanghai striving to *jiegui* with Shanghai. Notably, use of the term *jiegui* successfully channels potential discontent regarding uneven development towards a positive aspiration to catch up.

²⁰ As shown in Deng Xiaoping's repeat criticism of the mistakes of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four in persecuting intellectuals and scientists and keeping China closed to foreign influence.

Among all popular uses of the term, the application of *jiegui* shares two notable features. First, *jiegui* is used rhetorically to encourage those left behind by progress to strive to catch up. Consequently, in the context of Dengist Reform, *jiegui* is not used to encourage social justice but rather to mobilize the disadvantaged and plead for tolerance of temporary inconvenience or injustice. Second, as the catchphrase of a time that followed several decades of Closed Door policies, *jiegui* allows Chinese to reconsider and re-define the relationship between China and the rest of the world – particularly the Western capitalist societies. Justified by the call to *jiegui*, values, institutions, cultures, and goods from capitalist societies were represented as no longer evil and corrupting, but admirable and worthy of emulation. The language of *jiegui* helps assess China's development, including the compatibility between China's economic institutions and international systems, the availability of particular global commodities in Chinese markets, and the progress of China in catching up with the GDPs of wealthy foreign nations. Through the popularization of the language of *jiegui*, it is clear that, during the 1980s and 1990s, Chinese have seen their country having been left-behind and having to catch up with the rest of the world.

The misuse of the term *jiegui* was recognized and social scientists and officials warned against blind admiration of foreign things in the name of *jiegui*. One counter-measure proposed by communist officials and scholars was the emphasis on “Chinese characteristics.” The emergence of this tug of war between the emphasis on *jiegui* and on Chinese characteristics only demonstrates the significant foreign impact on post-Mao China. One critical observation that led me to suggest the emergence of a new post-reform era around 2000 was the weakening of calls for both *jiegui* and Chinese

characteristics. Rather than dichotomizing the world into China and “international society,” conceiving of China as distinct from the rest of the world, in the Olympic Era Chinese have confidently conceived China as a full-fledged member of the international community, creating new possibilities for negotiating Chinese subjectivity and the relationship between China and the world.

On July 1st 2001, at the ceremony marking the Eightieth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Chinese Communist Party, former president Jiang Zemin described Marxism as “a theory that has the nature of advancing together with the times (*juyou yushijujin de lilun pingzhi*)”. Jiang further acclaimed the importance of Yushijujin (advancing together with the times) on May 31st 2002 by making it the key in fulfilling the belief in the Three Represents Theory (*Sangedaibiao*).²¹ Yushijujin has subsequently – like *jiegui* – been widely and freely promoted, reiterated and elaborated by policy makers, scholars and mass media in diverse situations. For example, Yushijujin is used rhetorically in fields such as education quality, tourism development, stock investment, media reform, business development, and urban planning. Yushijujin has succeeded *jiegui* to become a new catchphrase in the pursuit of change in the Olympic Era. Yushijujin, owing to the enormous popularity of the term, has strongly influenced society and is a key slogan offering a new perspective from which Chinese can understand the continuous changes occurring in China. Yushijujin provides a socially approved value that rationalizes changes, including those that appear to contradict

²¹ The key statement of the theory is: “Reviewing the course of struggle and the basic experience over the past 80 years and looking towards the arduous tasks and bright future in the new century, our Party should continue to stand at the forefront of the times and lead the people on a march from victory to victory. In a word, we must always represent the development trend of China’s advanced productive forces, the orientation of China’s advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people in China.” (Quoted from Jiang Zemin’s talk at the CPC 80th Anniversary Gathering on July 1, 2001, re: <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/20010701/424759.htm>.)

communist orthodoxy, such as encouraging the pursuit of personal wealth and acknowledging private entrepreneurs as one of “the builders of socialism with Chinese characters”. The most interesting feature of the change of focus from *jiegui* in the 1980s and 1990s to *Yushijujin* in the 2000s is the shift of focus from the spatial to the temporal axes. *Jiegui* and *yushijujin* both indicate an intention to change, develop and advance. However, while *jiegui* focuses on catch up with what is spatially distant, either foreign developed countries or more urbanized regions, *Yushijujin* proposes an effort to remain at “the forefront of the times”, as argued in the Three Represents Theory. The implicit message of *Yushijujin* – that China is at the forefront of the times – is consistent with the characteristic of the new Olympic Era – namely, seeing China as the center of the world; such an appeal makes little sense if China does not see itself as already among those leading the world and the times. The role models associated with keeping at the forefront of the times have become Chinese and Chinese places such as the new rich and the city of Beijing. From the Reform Era to the Olympic Period, from the dreams of “*yu shijie jiegui*” to “*yushijujin*”, China is transforming from being externally-referencing to self-referencing.

Multiple Worlds, Multiple Dreams

“One World, One Dream (*Tong Yige Shijie, Tong Yige Mengxiang*),” the slogan of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, appeals for equality, sameness, harmony and sharing both within China and between China and the rest of the world. However, China’s becoming a

new world power, as symbolized by Beijing's staging the Olympics, did not result from improved social equality within China. Rather, the celebrated Olympic Era is based on rapidly increasing internal differences. What is being witnessed in the years of Olympic China and Beijing are *multiple worlds and multiple dreams*, not oneness. Playing with the evocative Olympic slogan, this study emphasizes that internal social differentiation is a key social phenomenon attesting to the changes within China, and also a key social issue driving the evolution of China.

Introducing internal social differentiation in Beijing and analyzing China's macro political and economic conditions under the rule of the communist party and the influence of economic globalization, this chapter establishes a macro historical context and a perspective for analyzing and understanding the following three chapters. Subsequently, Chapter 3 addresses internal differences within Beijing and examines the social niches of and relations among the three identified urban groups by focusing on their consumption behaviors. Chapter 3 juxtaposes the three socially and economically diverse groups, rather than focusing on any one of them, to examine a critical issue: the impact of experiencing a wealth gap on everyday life. Seeing a wealth gap in daily contexts (i.e., differences within a place) is different from knowing that there are remote individuals who are better or worse off (i.e., differences among regions). Since Deng Xiaoping's Early Rich plan, which encouraged uneven development among regions, also resulted in differences in wealth *within* a place, inequality and differences have become perceptible in everyday life, creating a new field for tension and competition. The taboo of talking about class (*jieji*) strongly suggests that conflicts over increased social and

economic differences remain an unresolved and hence crucial topic that deserves monitoring and analysis.

3

CONSUMPTION, CLASS “CONTACT ZONES” AND EMERGING SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION IN BEIJING

This chapter deals with Beijing and its social differentiations. Since the early 1990s, Beijing has witnessed extremely rapid urban development; growing consumerism driven by a booming economy and rising personal wealth and the move towards a market economy; increasing wealth inequalities; the arrival of surges of immigrants – including professionals from overseas and other parts of China, and manual laborers from other parts of China, and thus rapidly increasing diversity among residents. These different groups have played critical roles in the self image of one another as subjects of the city. This chapter examines the emergent social stratification and the making of these new identities in relation to the consumerism and argues that this focus on consumption both unites and divides Beijingers in highly-economically differentiated societies. Focusing on emerging social stratification in Beijing can illustrate how changes in state policy and macro international politico-economic environment influence local society.

‘Contact Zone’ of China’s Economic Globalization

“...the term “contact zones,” which I use to refer to the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable

conflict. ...“Contact zone” in my discussion is often synonymous with “colonial frontier.” But while the latter term is grounded within a European expansionist perspective (the frontier is a frontier only with respect to Europe), “contact zone” is an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect. ... A “contact” perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations among colonizers and colonized, or travelers and “travelees,” not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power (Pratt 1992, 6-7).”

Colonialism and imperialism are history, “travelers” come not by an imperial fleet but by intercontinental jets and the Internet, and the great powers that are sweeping across continents and oceans are global capital and investors, backed by nation-states. In this context, the concept of “contact zone” developed by Mary Louise Pratt is an intriguing and useful concept to adapt for the situation in Beijing at the beginning of the Twenty-First Century. Among the elements she defined, I would like to emphasize two things in adapting the terminology to examine the case of Beijing. First is the focus on the *co-presence* of previously separated and significantly unequal parties in the contact zones. Second is the emphasis on how the subjectivities of these parties are constituted through and in their mutual relations. The study of Beijing presented here was not guided by the concept developed by Pratt, and at no time did this study conceive Beijing as a “colony” of external powers. Rather, the interesting similarities, as discussed below, between “colonial frontiers” and Beijing, a capital city important to both the communist state and the global economy, inspired this work to adopt the perspective of Pratt.

In Pratt’s study, encounters in the contact zones involved colonizers and the colonized or travelers and “travelees”. The “radically asymmetrical power relations” between the involved parties originated from the political and economic disparities

between a dominant Europe and the parts of the world that it conquered. The parties encountering one another in Beijing considered in this study included global capitalist investors, privileged Chinese professionals, ordinary native residents of the city whose hometown was being transformed – by others – into a global space, and money- and opportunity-seeking domestic migrants. Not all of these people were separated geographically or culturally before the Reform Era. The contact zones in Beijing in the early 2000s were spaces characterized by the co-presence of and encounters among people from a borderless global community and local communities – not by interactions between a dominant global community and a vulnerable local one. The parties involved were not differentiated by nationality, ethnicity or birth-place. The asymmetrical relations among the various communities originated from differences in wealth and, mediated by differentiated consumption practices, were displayed as the emergence of stratified class relations in Beijing. The “contact zones” considered in this study are frontiers between the global and the local, as well as frontiers between different classes.

Contact zones are first and foremost spaces where people of diverse interests and cultures encounter one another. When using contact zones to frame emerging stratified social groups within Beijing during a period of economic globalization, the encounter space is not the entire city. Rather, this study uses contact zones to highlight a small number of spaces where “the global connects with the local” and where the interaction among various global and local parties is more intense and frequent. This chapter focuses on two such spaces in Beijing: the Central Business District (CBD) (*Zhongyang Shangwu Qu* or *Shangwu Zhongxin Qu*) and Liulichang the antique quarter. Addressing social differentiation via a spatial concept, this study attempts to demonstrate how differentiated

senses of a shared space reveal the manufacture and intersections of various kinds of identities. The following begins by analyzing the Central Business District including district development policy, inhabitants, and the interactions among inhabitants to ethnographically illustrate the relations among consumption, space, and social differentiations.

The Central Business District (CBD)

Diversity of the Central Business District

The Central Business District appears to be a bustling business district hosting regional headquarters of multinational firms and offering an international range of commodities and shops. Nevertheless, this four square kilometer area contains a diverse mixture of people and is home to a great deal of activity besides international business. To illustrate the wide variety of people within the CBD and their interactions, the story of Guying epitomizes the diverse and stratified society of Beijing and its Central Business District.

Many expatriate families in Beijing enjoy decorating their modern Western-style homes with Chinese antique-style furniture and decorations. Living in the imperial and contemporary capital of China and enjoying generous “home-country” incomes, these wealthy residents of Beijing have access to and can afford large quantities of high quality authentic or reproduction Chinese antiques. Guying is a trusted dealer in antique furniture and one of the key parties involved in creating beautiful homes in Beijing. Guying owns a large antique furniture reproduction and restoration factory in Chaoyang District, a large

district that also contains the Central Business District of Beijing. The factory, located outside the East Fourth Ring Road across from Chaoyang Park (Chaoyang Gongyuan), was close to both the Central Business District (CBD) and the numerous expensive residential communities in the northeast of the city. However, the neighborhood of the factory itself contains little of interest, representing the antithesis of the prosperous, modern and rapidly developing Chaoyang District. The factory was located within a shabby and chaotic “village” comprising old and decrepit courtyard houses surrounded by vacant lots overgrown with trees and weeds. Many of Guying’s clients visited the factory in their “black license plate” sedans (*heipai che*) – i.e., foreign owned cars with special license plates – driven by private drivers. They drove off the newly built East Fourth Ring Road and turned into a narrow dirt lane flanked by Poplar Trees. At the end of the dirt lane, which most first time visitors took to be a dead end, they made a sharp left turn into a still narrower and bumpier lane. After a few more turns, these visitors then encountered the ramshackle ‘village.’ Some of the residents were former peasants who, as a result of urban development, had lost their farm land and became a poor urban underclass. This neighborhood closely resembled the migrant village where Cui’an lives. Garbage was piled up on every street corner. In front of each brick courtyard house, young to middle aged men in threadbare clothes stood or squatted and stared at the cars of passing visitors. Guying’s factory was a relatively large courtyard house with tall red iron gates. It was difficult for neighbors to know what went behind the gates. When clients arrived, the drivers would honk and the gates would be opened. As soon as the cars entered the courtyard, the gates were shut tight and events in the yard were again closed to the surrounding villagers.

The environment inside the courtyard factory was much tidier than that outside. Usually a few cars are parked there, including one belonging to Guying, as well as some larger pieces of semi-processed wood and furniture. The brick houses were newly built buildings in the style of traditional courtyard houses. They were sparsely decorated, but were properly maintained and had a few rooms equipped with air-conditioners and high-quality antique furniture. The main house served as a reception center, as well as an office where Guying, her clients, and shipping company staff met and conducted business. The west house was a large storage and exhibition hall filled with different varieties of nearly finished Chinese style furniture, giving customers flexibility in selecting final refinements. The east house comprised some sprawling rooms used as a working and living space for the carpenters, other workers and domestic helpers. These personnel were all recruited and employed by Guying, and came from other parts of China. Unlike the cool and quiet reception hall, the east wing was usually messy, crowded with workers and furniture, and stuffy, with the air filled with sawdust and paint fumes.

Guying was a divorcee from Xi'an, aged in her early 40s, and raising a teenage daughter. Her family had no background in furniture restoration or the antique business. She simply had a passion for Chinese furniture and had taught herself the trade and then established her business. Occasionally, she would visit business partners in other provinces – often in small towns or the countryside – who supplied her with old furniture, old woodcarvings from dismantled houses or valuable woods. Although she continually emphasized that her business did not make a large profit (“only sufficient for subsistence [*zhineng hukou*],” she said), considering the number of clients she had, the size of her factory, and her lifestyle – maintaining a maid, a private sedan, an apartment, etc. – she

obviously made far more than ordinary working class Beijing families and could afford a very comfortable life. Her factory hired around a dozen carpenters and other specialized workers, plus two young girls to care for the daily needs of these workers including cooking, laundry, and some cleaning. At her home – an apartment in a typical Beijing apartment complex (*xiaoqu*) located about ten minutes driving distance from the factory, Guying had another domestic helper, who looks after the daily needs of her family. All of her employees were migrants from other provinces.

When clients – usually expatriate families or well-off Chinese professionals – visited Guying's factory, they either browsed what was available in the exhibition hall or ordered personalized furniture for their homes. Books covering Chinese furniture styles and fashion magazines introducing the same were available in the reception hall to serve as a reference for customers making personalized orders. Frequent customers often took family or friends who were visiting China from overseas to the factory to buy furniture for shipment back to their own countries because of the competitive costs. While many frequent customers visited the factory regularly, often as a stop on longer shopping trips, to browse Guying's new collections, their visits were often short. They left the factory and the 'village' as hastily as they came, rushing to their next stops, which typically included lunching at trendy restaurants, shopping in or around the China World Trade Center, picking up their kids from international schools or visiting Xiuhui Market to pick up the latest cheap knockoffs. The only evidence of these visitors that remained in the village was the floating dust kicked up by the wheels of their sedans.

With her coworkers, Guying turned old and valueless furniture and wood from rural villages and smaller towns into elegant and stylish must-have items for privileged

groups in Beijing. The process involved the efforts of many people, including the factory owner, carpenters, the maids employed at the factory and the home of Guying, the staff of shipping companies, Guying's business partners in other provinces and the small town and rural families who sold them old furniture and woodcarvings, the sedan drivers, and the wealthy families who purchased the final products. The example of Guying and her business demonstrates that Beijing, and particularly the Chaoyang District and the Central Business District, are inhabited not only by the rich and the professional, as is generally advertised, but also by ordinary Beijingers from more humble backgrounds and many migrant workers. Saskia Sassen (Sassen 1988; Sassen 1991) argues that high-income groups often demand commodities and services that are labor intensive and not mass-produced. The example of Guying's business demonstrates the material production of upper class life in Beijing, a process involving contributions from diverse groups. Beijing and the Central Business District, like the homes of Guying's wealthy clients with their mixture of Western and Oriental styles, is becoming a place where differences meet - including difference between the old and the new, the local and the global, and the rich, the ordinary and the poor.

As Beijing changes, the self-images of its various inhabitants also change. Addressing social differentiation in Beijing in the face of globalization and Chinese state policies, this study began by using the case of Guying to consider the perspectives of the poor who squatted on the street corners, wealthy antique buyers, carpenters, maids, drivers, and the business owner Guying. How did these different groups perceive one another? What happens when people are no longer "equally poor" – as the taxi driver I met in Xi'an had said was the case during the time before the economic reform? How do

the interactions among various groups emerging in the city affect their self images as subjects of the city? To answer these questions, this study first reviews processes and policies related to the creation of the Beijing Central Business District and then introduces the various inhabitants of the district and their differentiated lifestyles.

Plan for the Central Business District

The initial plans for the Central Business District of Beijing are contained in the General Urban Plan for Beijing, approved by the State Council in 1993. In 1998, the Beijing Central Business District was defined as comprising a roughly rectangular area of four square kilometers bounded by Dongdaqiao Road on the West, Xidawang Road on the East, Chaoyang Road on the North, and Tonghui River on the South.²² However, the plan only truly began to be implemented in 2000. Around 2000, Chaoyang District was already bustling with foreign residents, international and domestic tourists, local business elite, transnational companies, high-rise buildings, plentiful new office building construction, “commodified” residential compounds (*Shangping Fang*),²³ urban infrastructure, and diverse cultural, entertainment and shopping facilities. The Chaoyang District contained the Diplomatic District (*Shiguanqu*); regional headquarters of leading international financial, telecommunications, and information technology firms, such as UBS, BNP Paribas, Motorola, Intel, IBM, and Hewlett-Packard; top hotel, convention and exhibition facilities, serviced apartments, the Sanlitun Bar Street, and the Xiushui Markets favored by both tourists and white-collar workers. Building on these advantages,

²² Re: the official website of the Beijing Central Business District (<http://www.bjcbd.gov.cn/index.htm>).

²³ *Shangping Fang* (literally commodity houses) refers to apartment units or houses built by private development companies and are sold to private buyers. This category differs from the state-owned work-unit apartments (*Fuli Fengfang*, literally, welfare houses) that were the dominant residential style of the Mao era.

in 2000, the municipal government initiated a series of plans and policies to accelerate the construction of a Central Business District in Beijing. The building of the Central Business District in Beijing was a highly detailed and closely supervised state project, as demonstrated by the name of the relevant legislation – Detailed Control Plan for the Beijing Central Business District (*Beijing Shangwu Zhongxinqu Kongzhixing Xiangxi Guihua*). For example, comprehensive state projects include details regarding the ratio of different buildings fulfilling different functions (i.e. business, residential, and cultural and entertainment functions), infrastructure and public facilities, traffic planning, maximum building height at the district and even block levels, underground parking design, the width of pedestrian sidewalks on major avenues, and the size and location of parks and green belts. Besides urban planning, the Beijing Central Business District Administrative Commission also made detailed “industrial planning” and decided that the focus of the CBD should be on developing the financial services, telecommunications, information services, and consultancy industries. The Commission encouraged multinational firms to establish regional headquarters and research and development centers in the District, and also welcomed leading legal and accountancy firms to help establish advanced service industries in the District. The ultimate objective is to make the Central Business District into a regional or even global economic center. Indeed, the above aims of the Central Business District of Beijing, especially the focal industries, perfectly match the typical characteristics of existing global cities. When introducing the concept of the CBD, the commission clearly stated that the project was modeled after notable world-renowned business and financial districts, including Lower Manhattan in New York, La Defense in Paris, Shinjuku in Tokyo, and the Central District in Hong Kong.

Although this study focuses on the Beijing Central Business District to examine social reorganization and differentiation in Beijing, and although much of the ethnographic data presented in this chapter comes from this district, at the time I completed my main fieldwork in summer of 2001, the Central Business District was still not a familiar spatial concept among Beijingers. The efforts of the municipal and district governments to create a Central Business District had mainly been focused on land-developers, international businessmen, potential investors and the mass media, but not the local people. Hence, in my following discussions the Chaoyang District and the Central Business District were sometimes used as synonyms, with the former being the spatial term most commonly used to refer to the area of impressive development and conspicuous wealth witnessed in East Beijing. I argue the focus on the Beijing Central Business District is informative precisely because the concept of the Beijing Central Business District was created, defined and used by government to drive economic and social change not only within this four square kilometers area but also within the wider Chaoyang district, Beijing and China.

Everyday Lives of Business Professionals in the Central Business District

The representative subjects of the Central Business District were business professionals working in foreign and transnational corporations. This group defined and dominated the landscape, culture and economy of the area. Examining the everyday life of these business professionals reveals a distinctive lifestyle, including the fact that their lives were interlaced with numerous less privileged others, and that the CBD was an area embedded in – rather than isolated from – the city. The following presents the lifestyle of

Beijing business professionals who worked in the CBD through the cases of several key informants.

Around 8 o'clock in the morning, Qiyuan left her apartment at the Asian Games Village (*Yayuncun*), a relatively new residential and commercial area north of the North Fourth Ring Road. Like most working Beijingers, she commuted to work by bus and subway. An hour after leaving home, she arrived in the bustling Chaowai Business Avenue, a main road in the Central Business District on which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and many foreign companies were clustered. She worked as a human resources associate for the Beijing branch of a global biopharmaceutical development services company headquartered in New Jersey, USA. Qiyuan was not a native Beijinger but moved to Beijing when she was a child and completed her college education in Beijing. She had been working for foreign firms since the late 1990s. While the employees in her office were all 20-40 years old Chinese college graduates, the office was headed by a Taiwanese-American who flew to Beijing only once every few months. The office was located in one of the landmark business plazas in Chaoyang District, a plaza that also housed the Beijing headquarters of numerous transnational companies including Sanyo, Sony, France Airline, Coca Cola, Apple Computer, and NEC. Additionally, the building also contained stores of various international brands, including ESCADA, LAUREL, MONTBLANC, SWAROVSKI, and ESPRIT; as well as a convenience store and supermarket from Hong Kong. The above description seems like a typical office building from the business districts of cities such as New York, Tokyo, Hong Kong or Taipei, but in Beijing in the year 2000 it was considered an extraordinarily glamorous and “modern” place.

The office was colorfully painted in bright sky blue, orange and red tones. The furniture was curvy and painted brightly in the company colors. Several English newspapers and business magazines were available in the waiting area. The layout, furniture, and bright colors all gave a non-Beijing impression, making the office look very different from the plain and colorless offices of the government organizations and state-owned enterprises common in the capital city. The reception area and conference room were always decorated with fresh flowers and plants, delivered by a specialist office florist and replaced on a weekly basis. Meticulously maintained by female janitors, the office floor, as well as its glass doors and restrooms, were always shiny and clean. A Starbucks in the plaza lobby was the preferred supplier of food and beverages for meetings with clients from abroad or with supervisors from the Sydney regional office.

Qiyuan and her colleagues often lunched at the basement cafeteria in their office building, where a simple but filling lunch cost around 20 to 32 RMB. Sometimes, Qiyuan and her officemates bought pirated Video CDs (VCDs) of the latest movies at prices of 10 to 15 RMB per movie from Video CD vendors who regularly called by their office.²⁴ Sometimes, Qiyuan bought clothes and accessories from a shopping mall where a piece of domestically designed clothing could cost 800 to 1600 RMB – equal to one month's salary for the average employee of a domestic company in Beijing. Occasionally, she stopped by the supermarkets from Hong Kong in the basement of her office building for groceries, food, and daily necessities. This supermarket offered a greater range of imported vegetables, fruits, snacks and drinks than local supermarkets, and even local food and products could be purchased neatly packaged in small quantities, very different

²⁴ Around roughly the spring of 2001, the VCD format was gradually replaced by DVD on the market. Pirated DVD movies were a bit more expensive than VCDs for only a very short period of time. A few months later by the end of my fieldwork, pirated DVDs were sold at roughly 10-15 RMB each.

from the local markets where food was piled up in stands separated by slippery and smelly aisles. Once a week, Qiyuan and her coworkers would visit a health club within walking distance of her office to attend ballet or yoga classes. Qiyuan and her colleagues frequently enjoyed socializing together at cozy restaurants near her office building, lively bars in Sanlitun Bar Street, trendy and expensive restaurants near the China World Trade Center, or garden restaurants in renovated courtyard houses in small hutongs (alleyways) located in neighborhoods lying between high-rise office buildings.

A frequent attendee at these evening socials was Rene, the English teacher employed by Qiyuan's office and an American from California. Rene worked as a consultant for a culture and language training company. He provided English and cultural training classes for foreign and international companies. With more than five years of experience working as an English teacher and cultural consultant for international firms in China, Rene had friendships with numerous Chinese business professionals. Rene worked with these professionals in their offices and socialized with them after work on a daily basis. Rene said that he loved Beijing and particularly Chaoyang District because it was such a vibrant place, full of interesting places to go, different people to meet, and with new and exciting things happening every day.

Rene lived near the Chaowai business area (the location of Qiyuan's office) but not in one of the well-maintained and expensive foreigner compounds or serviced apartments. Instead, Rene rented a two-room apartment unit inside a typical Beijing work-unit community (*danwei fuli fang*) on Gongti North Road near Sanlitun Bar Street. Having moved to China to find work voluntarily rather than being relocated on an expatriate package, Rene preferred cheaper local apartments for economic reasons.

Equally importantly, Rene enjoyed the experience of living amongst Chinese neighbors. Rene's long and narrow apartment unit had two rooms, one at each end, connected by a small space that served as both the entrance and the kitchen. Like most old housing projects built by work-units (*danwei*), maintenance was inadequate, the stairways were dusty and dimly lit, and the electricity and water conduits within the apartments were poorly maintained. Furnished primarily by his Beijing landlord, the interior of his apartment resembled those of ordinary Beijing families. A very small restroom was located in the entrance-kitchen area opposite the apartment entrance. The restroom was so small that it was difficult to turn around between the sink and the toilet; and water could cover the entire floor when taking a shower.

This apartment was located within walking distance of most of the offices of Rene's clients in the Central Business District. To go to work, Rene generally walked through the dilapidated level house community between Gongti North Road and Chaowai Business Avenue. Located behind the big hotels and business buildings on these two main roads in Chaoyang District, these shabby low rise brick houses were often invisible to tourists and international professionals. These houses and communities were nothing exceptional, and continued to exist scattered among Beijing's numerous glistening high rises. Rene enjoyed his daily fifteen minute walk to work among these houses: the earthy and dirty alleyways, the sound of Beijing parents yelling at their kids, elderly residents fanning themselves as they squatted in front of their houses, and people holding big bowls of food and eating on the street, all of these revealed different sensual experiences and aspects of the city. Rene enjoyed being part of these scenes that contrasted so markedly with his workplace.

In the evenings and weekends, Rene often socialized with various Chinese professionals and foreign friends. Besides the bar streets, Western restaurants, and night clubs, he also frequented Chinese restaurants. Occasionally, he visited Chinese tea houses, or restaurants serving food of minority groups within China, such as the Xinjiang restaurants that served Middle Eastern food to the accompaniment of belly dancers and Central Asian music.

Jing Duan was another business professional that informant Rene introduced to me during one of these evening get-togethers. An extremely proactive and outgoing woman in her early thirties, Jing Duan impressed me at our first meeting with her fluent English and frequent laughter. Learning that I was doing fieldwork alone in Beijing, she asked me half-jokingly but also half-seriously and in English: “Are you a ‘MBA’ – Married But Available?” Jing Duan was a public relations manager in the Beijing office of a leading global technology and services company. She and her husband lived in and owned a three storey townhouse with a garden in a complex near Beijing international airport, an area famous for gated garden townhouse and villa communities for foreign residents and wealthy Chinese. They also owned a second apartment in the Asian Games Village which they rented out.

Every day Jing Duan and her husband would leave their suburban home in their Jeep, and her husband would drop her at her office on Guanghai Road before heading to his own workplace – a domestic private engineering company. Guanghai road occupied the heart of the Beijing Central Business District and was a relatively new business neighborhood in which new office buildings, full service apartments, shopping centers, and five-star hotels were located. International firms located on Guanghai road included

leading global technology, telecommunication, and financial services firms. This neighborhood was adjacent to the China World Trade Center and the Xiushui Market. During the day, Jing Duan was often busy meeting with Chinese colleagues and American office directors; holding press conferences with Beijing media, and communicating via phone and email with public relations associates in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hong Kong and other Asian offices. In this Beijing headquarters, beautiful black-and-red wall posters of the company's name written in cursive calligraphy hung in the hallways that linked a labyrinth of cubicles, providing the office with an artistic and oriental touch.

Outside the secure and air-conditioned steel-and-glass office buildings of Guanghai Road, projects were in progress to tear down old one storey houses. As a result, the roads and alleys around these office buildings were often dusty and earthy. Within the nearby old communities that had not yet been torn down, some old houses were remodeled into restaurants targeting white-collar workers in the nearby office buildings. Jing Duan often met with clients, journalists, and friends in these restaurants. Sometimes, she squeezed a bit of her precious lunch time and walked to the nearby Xiushui Market to shop for blouses, coats and silk scarves for herself or as corporate gifts. In the evenings, Jing Duan also enjoyed socializing with both Chinese and foreign friends.

These slice of life descriptions of a few informants working in the Beijing CBD reveal several things. First, the lives of these informants shared many similarities. Similar lifestyles helped these informants identify each other as belonging to a particular group. Second, the Central Business District contained many who belonged to neither the business elite nor the upper- or upper-middle classes. While these less-privileged groups

frequently interacted with the business professionals, they had a very different perspective on and experience of the rapidly changing and developing place in which they interacted. Third, the Chinese business professionals' lives were less isolated than I thought. They also shared experiences with other residents of the city on a daily basis. For example, they might take the same buses and subways home, buy food from the same street vendors, or enjoy free time on weekends at the same scenic spots. The following presents the lifestyles of other informants (i.e. non-business professionals) working in the Central Business District and demonstrates how they had very different perspectives on the CBD, and yet simultaneously shared many experiences with the business professionals.

The slice of life accounts of the everyday lives of business professionals reveal that participants in the Central Business District also include: office flower and office plant delivery men; janitors who maintain office buildings; waiters, waitresses, cooks, other employees and owners of Starbucks, office building cafeterias and restaurants in Sanlitun Bar Street; vendors of illegal Video CDs; sales people and managers of supermarkets, shopping centers, and markets such as Xiushui; building security personnel; trainers at health clubs; belly dancers and ethnic musicians. Additionally, many long time residents, such as Rene's landlord, also inhabit the apartments and level house communities that remain scattered among the imposing new glass-and-steel office buildings.

Everyday Lives for Other Residents in the Central Business District

The Central Business District and Chaoyang District that these “local people”, sales persons, and manual laborers experienced was very different from that experienced by the business professionals, even though they shared neighborhoods and sometimes even worked in the same buildings. For ordinary long-time residents of these districts daily life involved taking buses or riding bicycles to their work units, shopping for food at food markets (*jihuoshichang*), walking their dogs, and sitting and chatting with neighbors on the sidewalks in summer evenings to avoid the heat indoors. The lifestyles and consumption patterns of these long-term residents did not differ significantly from those of residents of work-unit communities in other districts. The eye-catching office buildings, shopping and entertainment facilities, and other destinations mushrooming in their neighborhood were foreign to them. Many of these long-term residents had never been to these places and did not see them as part of their everyday life.

For lower class manual workers, including migrant laborers like the maids and carpenters at Guying’s factory and the janitors of Qiyuan’s office, the prosperity of the Central Business District seemed irrelevant despite them often working in the newest office buildings for many hours a day or doing domestic work in the villas of wealthy professionals. The Central Business District was not a meaningful place for the many manual laborers who commuted there to work. The work places of this group comprised toilets, bathrooms, kitchens, and laundry rooms, and they saw a very different “Central Business District” to that seen by the business elite. These workers did not see stylish offices and homes, but rather an endless stream of clothes, dishes and messes requiring cleaning. In winter, they experienced freezing cold cleaning water and chilly winds on their long commutes to and from work. They smelled soiled clothes, food scraps, dirty

toilets and detergent. Despite often working amongst trendy and exclusive restaurants, if they ate at all during their working day it was typically nothing more than steamed buns or plain fried dough cakes, costing about 0.2 RMB per piece.

Significant differences in wealth, and thus in consumption patterns, lead to business professionals, ordinary residents and manual laborers having a very different sense of a place. This differentiation is especially clear in the CBD, which had the highest concentration of both professionals and manual service workers. The intersection of Jianwai Aveune and the East 3rd Ring Road provided a good example of how different perceptions of a single physical place could exist. This area was known by business professionals as “Guomao” – the abbreviation of Zhongguo Guoji Maoyi Zhongxin (the China World Trade Center) – and comprised office towers, headquarters of global companies, five-star hotels, flagship stores of world renowned brands, expensive restaurants, and full service apartments for transnational businessmen to cluster. Yet the same area was known to migrant laborers as “Dabeyiao”, the traditional name of this neighborhood and also the name of nearby bus stations. As an important bus and subway hub in eastern Beijing, Dabeyiao was familiar to the numerous migrant laborers who commuted to work by bus in Chaoyang District. Manual laborers were keenly aware of the differences between them and the wealthy. They divided the physical world of the Central Business District (and the city in general) into two spheres: one available to ordinary and poorer people like themselves, and another accessible only to the wealthy. They perceived certain places, buildings, situations and events as modern and upper-class, and hence as out of their reach. Dabeyiao was their place, while Guomao, the China World Trade Center, was somewhere inaccessible and which they had no desire to visit.

Cui'an was a domestic helper (*ayi*) from Anhui aged in her late 30s. Every weekday morning, she left the migrant village where she lived in southeast Beijing at 6 am and made the two-hour bus trip to eastern Chaoyang District where most of her employers lived.²⁵ Other than changing routes at the Dabeyao bus hub, her daily routine rarely gave her cause to visit other places in Chaoyang District. Even though she spent most of her weekdays in Chaoyang District, her entire day was basically spent waiting for buses, riding buses, or working inside offices and apartments. The astonishing development of the Chaoyang district was irrelevant to her. On one occasion, during a trip to visit her village, Cui'an and I were waiting for a bus at Dabeyao bus station immediately in front of the glass-walled entrance to an underground shopping arcade and indoor ice rink attached to the China World Trade Center. I asked Cui'an if she ever visited the place. She said no, and firmly refused my invitation to take a look at the place together, despite her obvious curiosity about the building. Urged by me, she explained, "I do not like to go to this kind of *high-end and luxurious places* (*gaogui haohua de difang*) [emphasis mine]. The people in there can tell that we are country bumpkins (*xiangxiaren*) at a glance." Not wishing to be looked down on as a bumpkin, Cui'an consciously divided the city into different zones, and curtailed her movements and activities accordingly. Cui'an thus defined her place in the city by differentiating herself from those who belonged to "high-end and luxurious places", much like the Peking University

²⁵ The so-called migrant village is not a village in the sense of state administration. Nevertheless, the label village makes sense in two ways. First, Shijingshan – the southeastern district of Beijing where the migrant village in which Cui'an lived was located – was traditionally well known in Beijing as a heavy industry district. Besides heavy industry, the remainder of the district mostly comprised farmland, divided into various villages (*cun*), country towns (*xiang*), or simply parcels of land (*di*). Village Huai where Cui'an lived had been farmland before herself and other Anhui immigrants moved there. Second, most of the peasants who owned the surrounding farmland no longer do farm work. Instead, they have become landlords – building simple brick courtyard houses to rent to migrant laborers. Since the majority of tenants in a particular area typically come from the same province, or even from the same towns or counties, the term 'migrant village' is very apt.

graduate who defined herself against those “dongbian de ren (people of the east)”, as explained in detail below. Both of them used another group in the city as a constitutive outside when seeking their own identities in this changing city.

A sizeable group among those working or living in the Central Business District was relatively well-educated young adults from other provinces who attempted to establish themselves in Beijing, often after having completed their college education there. Luo Zhi was in his early twenties, from southern China and a graduate of a Beijing college. After graduating, he began working for a Chinese art auction company located inside the campus of the Central Academy of Arts and Design (*Zhongyang Gongyi Meishu Xueyuan*).²⁶ The Academy was located in the heart of the Central Business District, right next to the new headquarters of CCTV – a building designed by the world-renowned Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas and one of the landmark projects of the city – and across the street from the China World Trade Center and the Guanghua Road Area. Although the campus was located in one of the most expensive neighborhoods of Beijing, it was a state institute and the facilities were extremely basic. Luo Zhi’s office was similarly basic, occupying the top floor of a tiny three-story warehouse building in the northeast corner of the campus. The outdoor iron staircase leading to the office was so narrow that it could only accommodate one person at a time. The office furniture had been obtained second-hand from the campus, and the office was partitioned with simple wooden boards. The desk of Luo Zhi occupied a cramped attic within the already crowded office space, and the simple act of standing necessitated taking care to avoid bumping one’s head on the ceiling.

²⁶ The school became the Academy of Arts and Design of Tsinghua University in 1999. Nevertheless, in 2000 and 2001, it was still popularly referred to by its traditional name.

Besides his simple office, Luo Zhi's lifestyle was also very different from the business elite. Luo Zhi rented a room in a dilapidated one storey brick house community in Hepingli, near the Northeast corner of the Third Ring Road. Most days, he cycled to work by a 30 minute commute to save both money (4 RMB per day in bus fares) and time (the traffic of the Third Ring Road could be terrible during the rush hour). His dinner could be as simple, even lacking in nutrients, as toast with some hot pepper sauce. When he invited me to dine together near his office (i.e., in the heart of the Central Business District), we visited a restaurant in a very small and dark ally where a simple but plentiful meal cost around 20 RMB. With fish, meat, and vegetable dishes, I knew it was a treat for Luo Zhi. Even though Luo Zhi spent as little as possible on lodging and food, unlike manual laborers, he was willing to spend money on certain commodities, especially technological gadgets. Even though the small room where he lived was inside a shabby and unkempt one storey brick house, the door was secured by only a small padlock, and the windows were covered with old newspapers (to maintain privacy in the absence of curtains), Luo Zhi did own an old but functional air-conditioner (which he did use when necessary), a well-equipped desktop computer, which provided him with Internet access and also doubled as a video player and stereo, and a mobile phone. The mobile phone, actually provided by his office, was the newest model at that time and cost roughly 2400 RMB, equivalent to roughly two and half months of Luo Zhi's salary.

Luo Zhi exhibits another style of living and working in the Central Business District. One part of his life – his accommodation and the meals he ate – resembled that of the migrant laborers, whereas other parts of his life – watching VCDs in the evenings and owning a late model mobile phone – resembled the lives of business professionals.

With extremely limited disposable income, Luo Zhi's lifestyle was no doubt very different from that of the so called white collars or business professionals. For example, he seldom bought Video CDs, instead borrowing them from friends or downloading movies from the Internet; moreover, to save money, Luo Zhi generally used his mobile phone only to send short messages and not to make calls. However, unlike manual laborers, he was not intimidated by the glamorous aspects of the Central Business District; on the contrary, he paid particular attention to those aspects. He took business professionals working for multinational firms as his role models and aspired to become one in the near future. Luo Zhi was the informant who taught me concepts such as "white collar" and "golden collar (meaning white collar workers with superior positions and incomes)" and identified himself as a would-be white collar. He described his ideal future as follows: "working in one of the best buildings in Beijing, earning a golden collar income, and spending money (*xiaofei*) at high-end stores and restaurants." Like manual laborers and other ordinary residents of the city, Luo Zhi also defined himself relative to the business professionals and other groups in the city. From his descriptions of his ideal future in the city, material conditions, consumption patterns, and ownership of certain goods such as late model mobile phones, were clearly critical to his fulfillment of a new identity, specifically, the urban professional identity to which he aspired.

Space Making and Emerging Social Order

The Central Business District provides an example of space making in Beijing during the transitional period of 2000 and 2001. The newly created Central Business District – which combined a rapidly improved physical environment and aspirations of coming

closer to being the center of the world and enjoying opportunities to profit from newly globalized policies – was a paradise for privileged Chinese and foreigners, but was simultaneously alienating to many long-term native residents. I argue that similar processes of space making resulting from economic development and state policy are crucial to the emergence of a new social order in the city. Examining struggles related to space making can bring out distinctions and intersections among various categories of identity, such as class, birth-place, generation and gender.

State and local government officials designed the Central Business District of Beijing as a place for international business. As a result of domestic and foreign investment, the CBD witnessed the mushrooming of office buildings, convention centers, hotels and other entertainment facilities designed to facilitate business activities, as well as the gathering of a workforce comprising business professionals and laborers providing manual services. For those not involved in the daily life of the Central Business District, the place became a unique area in Beijing, estranged from the rest of the city. I gained a deep impression of how the Central Business District was a unique space in Beijing when hanging out with a group of Peking University graduate students in their dormitory. Peking University is located in Haidian, in the northwest of the city, far from Chaoyang district, and students at Peking University visited the CBD only infrequently.

One hot summer day in 2000, I stopped by a dormitory for female graduate students at Peking University. Four students who had just returned from class on feminist literature sat around the room. They chatted and joked casually among the messy desks and a pair of bunk beds. A few minutes later, another student hurried into the room. She had very short hair, wore a simple T-shirt and jeans, and carried a backpack. As she

slammed her bag onto the desks and collapsed onto one of the beds she yelled: “I am just back from *dongbian* (east side). It is so not Beijing!” The rest of the students seemed to understand perfectly what she meant by “east side”. I doubled checked with her and confirmed that ‘east side’ referred to Chaoyang District, and specifically she had visited Guanghai Road, Jianguomenwai Avenue and the Xiushui Market. She went on to complain that “*naxie dongbian de bailing* (those white-collars of the east side)” dressed in elegant, formal and serious business suits and looked completely different from the people of the Peking University neighborhood, and moreover that the clothes sold at Xiushui Market (famous for its cheap knockoffs) were unreasonably expensive. She concluded by saying that she felt uneasy over there and it was nice to be back on campus.

‘Dongbian (east side)’ or ‘dongbian de ren (people of the east side)’ were not well established categories or identities. However, this story shows that in the eyes of those who did not frequent the Central Business District, the production of space and relevant identity are occurring among these few streets and blocks of brisk international business activities. Furthermore, it also clearly demonstrates that the graduate student perceived a social distinction between “the people of the east side” and herself. From the perspective of Beijingers outside the Central Business District, this district was a space reserved for business professionals, foreigners and wealthy people. Ordinary long-term residents and poorer new migrants were rendered invisible.

Representing modernization and the wealth of the city, and indeed of China, the Central Business District of Beijing, is in fact a place of diversity: a place for both the rich and the poor, the mobile and the confined, and for international sojourners, domestic migrants and native residents. The Central Business District is one of the ‘contact zones’

in Beijing where internationalized culture, material condition, and social formation meets the 'local' Beijing cultures, lifestyles, and communities. Among the shining high-rise office buildings and landmark architecture by world-renowned designers, the Chaoyang District still contains many traditional work-unit communities and old one-storey houses and remains home to many "ordinary people" living on meager incomes. Nevertheless, the ambition of the Chinese state for internationalization, together with the efforts of Chinese business professionals, foreign expatriates and leading global firms, have profoundly influenced the urban landscape of the Chaoyang District and transformed the CBD into a global community space. Since the Central Business District is defined by business professionals, those who physically inhabited this area but were not a part of the global social milieu were alienated from their place of residence and from the "global people" they encountered on a daily basis. I argue that social differentiation emerges from this alienation, including alienation between individual identity and the identity of the places where they lived. Not unlike the powerless new migrants, the less-privileged native residents sensed that they had lost the power to define the characteristics of their hometown, and thus had undergone a change in identity and social status. Living and sharing the physical space of the Central Business District, social differentiation resulted from the different perceptions of the place of different groups of residents: the business professionals considered it a global space, lower-middle class native Beijingers considered it a changing hometown that still retained a legacy of its traditional culture and lifestyle, and domestic labor migrants considered it a capital city offering better work opportunities than the places from which they originated.

Furthermore, I argue that consumption is a crucial domain of everyday life, and involved the production of new senses of place and new social differentiations. As demonstrated by the comment of the Peking University graduate student, choice of dress differentiated herself and the “people of the east side”, making her uncomfortable. The various social cohorts in the city and were often distinguished materially, for example through clothing, housing, means of transportation, dining, and so on, and it was their consumption practices that created most of these material differences. Interestingly, these differentiated social groups maintain daily relations and interactions with each other. Through these intensive daily interactions, the various groups critically influence one another’s self image as subjects of the city. In other words, they become the “constitutive outside” for each other in their search for new positions and subjectivities in the rapidly transforming and stratified city.

Consumption and Social Differentiation

In the era of global capitalism and consumerism, commodity consumption has become a major sphere where, according to Hegel’s theory of identity formation (1977 (1910)), we seek “others”. The Reform Era in China, which saw the country join the global market and the development of consumerism, occurred as the country entered a late socialist era. Before addressing consumption and social differentiation in Beijing in post-Reform China, this study briefly examines the issue of material comfort during the Maoist years.

Notably, Chinese communism and socialism never objected to material comfort or consumption. The Chinese Communist regime before the 1980s, particularly during the years of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, was often associated with severe material conditions, making it easy to overlook the fact that communism ultimately aims to improve people's lives *materially*. As quoted by Eric Mueggler (2001), the words of Tan Zhenlin, "a close associate of Mao Zedong and a major architect of the Great Leap policies," to promote the dream of the Great Leap Forward during the 1950s clearly show relationship between communism and consumption, even lavish consumption:

"After all what does communism mean? ... First, taking good food and not merely eating one's fill. At each meal one will enjoy a meat diet, eating chicken, pork, fish, or eggs. ... To be sure, delicacies like monkeys' heads, swallows' nests, and white fungus will be served to each according to his needs. ... Second, clothing. Everything required will be available. Clothing of various designs and styles, not a mass of black garments or a mass of blue garments. In the future, ordinary cloth will be used only for making working outfits. After working hours, people will wear silk, satin, and woolen suits. ... When all the People's Communes raise foxes, there will be overcoats lined with fox furs. ... Third, housing. Housing will be brought up to the standard of modern cities. ... Central heating will be provided in the North, air conditioning in the South. All will live in high-rise buildings. Needless to say, there will be electric lights, telephones, piped water, radios, and televisions (179)."

Even though Tan was later accused of being pro-capitalist (*zouzipai*) during the Cultural Revolution, his words provide a reminder that material comfort has long been the ideal of the Chinese Communist Party. What changed between the Chinas of Tan and Deng was the means used to achieve material abundance, which shifted from an emphasis on collective production to one on individual consumption and prosperity.

What occurred after the Dengist economic reforms was that, after four decades of forced communist education, Chinese suddenly embraced a market economy and the capitalist accumulation of personal wealth. The frustrations associated with the severe material conditions during the Maoist heyday prepared Chinese to make this sudden change. Proposing a world of material abundance yet failing to achieve it, communism in China fostered a desire for commodities and thus laid the groundwork for the rapid development of consumerism during the reform era. Analyzing the desire for consumer goods in the Chinese interior, Louisa Schein (2001) observes that the culture of consumption that evolved during the 1990s was decidedly shaped by the denial of hope and material comfort during the socialist period. The lack of goods and commodities during most of the Mao years produced a collective experience of unfulfilled commodity desire. Schein explains the relationship between socialism and commodity desire using Katherine Verdery's analysis of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: "... even as the regimes prevented people from consuming by not making goods available, they insisted that under socialism the standard of living would constantly improve ... Socialism ... aroused desire without focalizing it, and kept it alive by deprivation ...". This unfulfilled desire then kindled a powerful surge of commodity desire once commodity and disposable income – whether large or small – became available (Schein 2001).

The Novelty of Disposable Income

In the socialist period, both goods and money were scarce. The majority of Chinese had little or no monetary income. The lack of money in the national economy over a period of

several decades has driven a strong desire to own and display money, with possession of money becoming an end in itself rather than a means to a better life.

Blue Lotus is a bar and café located on the quiet hutong on the north shore of the picturesque Shishahai (Shisha Lake). The place exhibited an unmistakable nostalgia for old and Imperial Beijing through its view of Shishahai – the time-honored scenery of the Imperial Palace; its location in a renovated courtyard house; and the incorporation into its décor of Chinese elements such as white paper lanterns, bamboo fences, folding doors, and wooden window panels. On weekdays, Blue Lotus was relatively quiet and patronized only by a scattering of foreign or Chinese tourists. I asked a waiter how many foreign customers they usually had. “Usually, half and half (*tongchang yiban, yiban*),” he replied. In other words, the patrons were usually split between Chinese and foreigners. Having said that, he abruptly volunteered the comment: “foreigners come to have tea (*he cha*) and Chinese come to spend money (*xiaofei*, which is usually translated as “consumption” and literally means spending).” I asked him to explain the difference between having tea and spending money: wasn’t having tea also a way of spending money? The waiter blushed and explained that Chinese would spend more money on more expensive alcoholic drinks and meals. I had noticed that waiters in this establishment often recommended that customers order potato chips and wine or beer, all of which were more expensive than tea. The waiter politely withdrew from further conversation despite my solicitation.

I wondered if the waiter meant that foreigners came to Blue Lotus to consume “China”, namely the view of Shishahai and the experience of drinking tea in a courtyard house, whereas Chinese came to enjoy spending money for its own sake. Could the

ambiguity of the waiter's remarks, talking about consumption without defining what was being consumed, reflect the fact that the act of spending money itself was more meaningful than the commodity acquired? It seemed that the Chinese who came to Blue Lotus to "spend money" obtained satisfaction from having disposable income to squander. Is the experience of spending money at a place like Blue Lotus a means to acquire necessary "cultural capital" for desired social distinction (Bourdieu 1984)? While the availability of disposable income is new, it is not confined to the wealthy. Compared to the period before the market reforms, by the late 1990s most people had at least some money to spend. The research I conducted in Xijiang the Miao New Year of 2000 demonstrated how rural and poorer people also have some disposable income.

A Periodic Market in Xijiang

November 1st, 2000 was the day of the periodic market (*ganchang*) in Xijiang,¹ a Miao village in Southeast Guizhou.² By late morning, the haze in the valley had lifted, the weather was mild and comfortable, and the air was refreshing. On the main street, villagers set up stands comprising bamboo poles and wooden boards, with each individual stand lashed to its neighbor for support. Items sold in the market included children's clothes, hair accessories, bamboo combs, audio cassettes, incense and money for the dead, ironware and leaf tobacco. Most of these items were sourced from Leishan

¹ The periodic markets (*Ganchang*) take place on both the seventh and the twelfth days of a twelve-day cycle. The market held on the seventh days of this cycle (*Wuri* or *Machangtian*) is called "the big market (*Gandachang*)," and involves more villages, vendors and buyers. Meanwhile, the market held on the twelfth days of this cycle (*Hairi* or *Zhuchangtian*), is called "the small market (*Ganxiaochang*)," and involves fewer villages, vendors and buyers.

² For ethnographic information regarding Xijiang, see *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics* (Schein 2000).

and Kaili, the nearby county and regional seats.³ Besides these there was also cotton yarn, embroidered slings, Miao black blouses, pencil-drawn embroidery patterns (including Pocket Monsters and Doraemon patterns) for traditional clothes, bamboo baskets and blankets, and piglets, fruits, vegetables, roosters, and hens. These items were from Xijiang or nearby villages. Most of the vendors were local villagers, but a few came from elsewhere. For example, the seller of music tapes, walkmans, and beepers was from as far away as Hunan province. At lunch time, elementary school students (*xusheng wawa*) from the nearby school would linger around his stand enviously browsing the albums of popular singers from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and even Korea. The Hunan vendor commented that the male students usually had more money to spend than the girls. Sister Yang, my hostess in Xijiang, who sold clothes and other accessories at the market, disagreed and argued that boys were not as prudent as girls, and therefore tended to spend more at the market.

The New Year of the Miao (*Miaonian*, occurring in the lunar months of October, after the harvest) was shortly arriving, meaning many parents came to shop for the New Year. Sitting next to Sister Yang and watching from behind her stand, I saw many parents stopping by to browse her selection of children's clothes. The most expensive item among her merchandise was a denim suit, including a pair of pants and a jacket, which she was willing to sell for 60 RMB. Even though a few parents had their children try the suit on, in the end no one bought it. As the market was drawing to a close, a middle aged man stopped by with his preschool son. The man decided to buy a jacket carrying

³ Sister Yang (my hostess) ordered three 'silver' (in reality, made by cupronickel [*Baitong*]) ornamental head-dresses from a silversmith in another village in Xijiang to sell in Leishan the day before the market. She paid the silversmith for RMB 65 each and would sell them for RMB 80 each on Leishan's market. She used the money earned to buy goods, mostly children's clothes, sold at the periodic market in Xijiang.

a cartoon character design for the boy, and when he paid I was impressed by the very thick deck of RMB 2 yuan bills he produced from his pocket. He carefully counted the money a few times and drew out 36 RMB to pay Sister Yang. Held in his suntanned and cracked hands, the undersized and worn RMB 2 yuan bills looked even smaller, almost valueless in fact. However, the stack of bills passed to Sister Yang, the care with which the father counted the money and the excitement on the boy's face all confirmed that the jacket was a valuable gift and that the price of 36 RMB was high. No matter how small the actual value of the deck of RMB 2 yuan bills was (36 RMB was equal to 4.5 dollars), it was considered a large sum of money in Xijiang, and the father certainly only spent this quantity of money on a single purchase on special occasions. The small value of the bills reflected the much more limited market and need for cash in Xijiang compared with larger towns and cities.

Most Chinese, including business professionals working in the Beijing Central Business District, Chinese customers at the Blue Lotus, and villagers in Xijiang, were becoming accustomed to having disposable income and spending money after several decades of material scarcity, and *xiaofei* (consumption) offered them a chance to depart from their subjectivity as “the new socialist man”, produced during the era of Maoism and framed by the rhetoric of a new China characterized by communist equality, and obtained new subjectivity as consumers of the Reform China.

Consumption, Xiaofei and Late Socialist Consumers

With its improved national economy and newly available disposable income, the China of the Reform Era witnessed an emerging consumerism. Consumption (*xiaofei*),

consumers (*xiaofeizhe*) and consumer rights (*xiaofeizhe quanyi*) became popular terms and values, perhaps even fashionable. As hinted at in the story regarding the customers of Blue Lotus, the status that Chinese consumers enjoyed derived not from the commodities which they exchanged for money, but rather the process of consumption itself – in Chinese, *xiaofei*. The word *xiaofei* comprises two characters: *xiao* and *fei*. *Xiao* means to eliminate, to use up, to cause to disappear, to dissolve and to spend. Meanwhile, *fei* can be a noun meaning budget or fee, or it can be a verb meaning to waste, wear out or lose. The two terms could almost be synonyms, and when used together they specifically mean to spend or eliminate a budget. When translating from Chinese to English, besides ‘consumption’, *xiaofei* is sometimes phrased more colloquially as “spending money.”

While the English term consumption implies taking something in, *xiaofei* – or spending money – entails giving something away. The difference between consumption as acquiring and *xiaofei* as giving provides an interesting insight into the pleasure provided by *xiaofei* for Chinese Reform consumers. This study suggests that *xiaofei* generally evokes very different *experiences* from those evoked by the English term consumption. For Chinese consumers, the point of consumption is not the commodities obtained but rather enjoyment of the ability to spend. If conspicuous consumption displays the things acquired (i.e. “badges” in Weber’s language (Weber 1946)), “conspicuous *xiaofei*” displays availability of disposable income. To understand the culturally-embedded meaning and experience of consumption, I argue that it is important to consider that in the Reform Era disposable income had only recently become available following several decades of material and monetary scarcity. Through consumption

practices, including accessing markets stocked with a wide variety of commodities, making purchases rather than just browsing, possessing commodities and even discarding recently acquired commodities, Chinese of the Reform Era, enjoyed and materialized experiences that were distinct from those of the Maoist era. Consumption thus offers a means of establishing new identities in an era of material abundance rather than one of material deprivation. This study proposes that consumerism in Reform China was encouraged not just by capitalist market operations and culture in the global market but also by the historically-embedded desire to leave behind a past of poverty and material hardship. Thus, while wealth and consumption differences contribute to social differentiation in Beijing as well as elsewhere in China, consumption practices also unify a generation of Beijingers and Chinese. The phenomenon of consumption thus both unifies and divides Beijingers and Chinese in an economically-stratified way.

While consumption became an increasingly important daily experience for identity creation during the Reform Era, the negotiation of such identity is, intriguingly, influenced by the Communist ideological legacy. Analyzing consumption in the Reform Era demonstrates how consumption practices effectively mediate the cultural transition from Maoist to Dengist communism, and how the emerging consumers of the Reform Era are “late socialist” consumers.

Once a year around March 15th, which is World Consumer Rights Day, consumers and consumption related issues make headlines in Chinese newspapers. This special day is translated into Chinese as *Guoji Xiaofeizhe Quanyi Jinianzi* (literally ‘International Consumer Rights Day’), but the day is more widely known as “315” or

“315 *Dajia* (anti-fakes).”⁴ 315 is a big day that is marked by activities across the nation in China. Weeks before mid March, the central state begins making announcements related to consumer rights, and government offices at all levels hold activities. I first heard of 315 during the summer of 2000 when Luo Zhi and Weiwei, his girlfriend, joined me on my regular trips to study markets and consumers. On the evening of 315 we were strolling and window shopping on Wangfujing Avenue (Wangfujing Dajie). While we browsed inside the landmark Baihuo Dalou (an old and famous department store named “Department Store”), Luo Zhi noted with a hint of admiration: “this is where Wang Hai bought his pair of fake SONY earphones and became a national hero.”⁵ I was puzzled. Luo Zhi went on to explain that Wang Hai was a “nationally famous consumer hero.” Specifically, Wang Hai was the first ordinary person who had used the new consumer law to exercise his right as a consumer to ask a store to pay him back the purchase price plus an equivalent sum in compensation for selling fake merchandise.⁶ Wang went on to build a career as a “professional knockoff inspector (*zhiye dajiaren*),” who made a living by seeking out fake commodities, purchasing them, and then forcing the store to pay compensation. While a controversial figure, Wang had made a great deal of money as a “professional consumer” and many people admired him. Luo Zhi went on to relay the excitement surrounding the 315 Consumer Rights Day. He said that on March 15th, everyone shopped with the hope of becoming the next “Wang Hai”, thinking they could make some money by finding fake or substandard merchandise (*jiamao weilie*

⁴ China Consumers’ Association (*Zhongguo Xiaofeizhe Xiehui*) joined the Consumers International (CI) in September 1987 and China has been celebrating the World Consumer Rights Day annually since 1988.

⁵ In fact, Luo Zhi was confused with the location. The place where Wang Hai first asked for doubled compensation for faked commodity sold was at Longfu Daxia (Longfu Building) also in Eastern Beijing.

⁶ The consumer law is Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Consumers Rights and Interests issued in 1993.

shangping). Nevertheless, this wish was hard to realize because naturally few vendors dared sell knockoffs on March 15.

I was impressed by the story but skeptical of the importance of Consumer Rights Day. Nevertheless, on March 15, 2001, I witnessed the national zeal for 315. I was conducting research in Xi'an at the time and had almost forgotten about 315. Several informants phoned me that morning and asked if I wanted to go and "inspect the markets" together and try our luck. We went to Luoma Shichang (the Mule and House Market) where Xi'an residents often shopped for knockoffs or other cheap but fashionable items. Significantly fewer commodities than usual were on display but the market was extremely crowded. Many vendors hung signs expressing their support for consumer rights and the fight against knockoffs. It was ironic and interesting that on World Consumer Rights Day, most "consumers" did not wish for the disappearance of knockoffs and substandard commodities, but rather hoped to profit from finding fake commodities.

The legend of Wang Hai and the nationwide activities to mark World Consumer Rights Day present intriguing twist in the negotiation of identity based on consumption – or, more precisely, *xiaofei* – in the Reform Era. The development of markets and the emergence of consumerism in China have been accompanied by numerous problems with fake and substandard commodities and vendor dishonesty. The power relationship between sellers and buyers is highly asymmetrical. Hence, while seeking consumption-based identity, Chinese regularly encountered the unpleasant experience of being cheated. Wang Hai became a "legend" in China because he, as an ordinary consumer, successfully defended himself against and even profited from dishonest

vendors. The national zeal for consumer rights was often presented as a search for justice (*qiu gongdao* or *qiu gongping zhengyi*), a value that I see as closely associated with Maoist ideology. While consumption based identity, consumerism and consumer rights all emerged after the Dengist period, the conceptualization of the consumer was influenced by Maoist values. I thus argue that the Chinese consumers of the early 2000s, who emphasized the ability to spend money and framed consumer rights as an opportunity to earn money through identifying knockoffs, are late socialist consumers – or *xiaofeizhe*. The interesting characteristics of the late socialist consumer demonstrate how consumption is a key domain of daily life to consider in studying social transformation in Beijing and China.

Consumption-mediated Social differentiation

In Reform China, *xiaofei* was clearly a key component of life for Chinese everywhere, regardless of income level. Through income earned, markets accessed and commodities acquired, consumption-based identities replaced the Maoist Era identities based on occupation, relations to the means of production and revolutionary commitment. In this sense, as China transformed from a politically-oriented and closed society into an economically-oriented and open society, consumption provided a shared experience of social change and mediated the production of a proper subjectivity of the Reform Era. Nevertheless, besides unifying society during a transitional period, differences in consumption, themselves affected by differences in wealth, shaped emerging social differences and influenced social divisions. The following discussion of home remodeling demonstrates consumption-mediated social differentiation.

Zhuangxiu, referring to home remodeling and furnishing, had been a key area for displaying different consumption behaviors since the beginning of the privatization of housing in the 1980s. The style of zhuangxiu can reveal when and for whom an apartment was remodeled. One of the most popular styles in the late 1980s and the early 1990s was the use of abundant wooden decoration, with ceilings, walls, hallways, and doorways all being decorated and finished with wood. Even heaters were wrapped in wooden boxes, with the heat outlets hidden behind latticework air vents that were decorated in forms such as phoenixes and pine trees, symbols of good fortune and longevity. A wooden living space, rather than one surrounded by bare cement walls, provided a visual demonstration of material abundance.

Since the late 1990s, particularly in the cities, differences in wealth increased dramatically, and so too has the variety in styles of remodeling and furnishing. Many young professionals in Beijing now prefer a more colorful, simplistic, and individualistic style, which exhibits their personal taste, and decorations that show their idiosyncratic experiences, for example collections of memory-laded objects gathered during journeys overseas or to remote parts of China. The opening of Swedish furniture store IKEA in Beijing and Shanghai after 1998, selling similar global merchandise to its stores in other countries, provided timely satisfaction and encouragement for the trend towards individual style in home decoration. On weekends the crowded pavement in front of IKEA's Beijing store on the North Fourth Ring road was always packed with the private sedans of shoppers. The store was like a theme park devoted to a "modern and Western lifestyle" and was always crowded with large family groups (including grandparents, parents and kids) or young couples who came either to shop or to browse the styles.

Some visitors even brought their own carpenters to get inspiration or even measure up the furniture on display.⁷

Besides the “modern IKEA style,” there is also an emerging interest in Chinese antique furniture among the new rich. Similar to the trend among expatriate families (foreigners as well as overseas Chinese), some urban business professionals increasingly enjoy buying genuine antique furniture at weekend antique flea markets or reproduction antique furniture at specialized stores (such as Guying’s factory) to give their living spaces an antique taste. Both genuine and reproduction antique pieces often cost more than contemporary furniture. Hence, buying such furniture is not merely a matter of style but also a means of displaying economic power. This study argues that during the period of economic reforms China witnessed the emergence of a consumption mediated urban social hierarchy. It is through differences as tangible as residential type (for example, old one storey brick house, high-rise apartment building, or suburban villa) and furnishing style (cement walled rooms cluttered with belongings, comfortable spaces carefully decorated with wood, “IKEA apartments”, or spacious rooms decorated with tasteful antique furniture) that people distinguish themselves from others and define their social positions in this city in transition.

Another ethnographic example of how differences in disposable income and consequently diverse consumption practices contribute to the differentiation of social hierarchy among newly emerged Chinese consumers are the comments made by a foreign media professional in Beijing regarding cultural consumption of Beijingers. When

⁷ As a famous international brand newly introduced to Beijing in the late 1990s, Beijingers considered IKEA furniture famous, valuable, fashionable and thus worth copying. IKEA furniture in Beijing was more expensive than most local products and not easily affordable by “ordinary people,” leading shoppers to ask carpenters to duplicate items they saw on the IKEA shop floor.

analyzing the development of the film industry in China, the Canadian sales manager of Imar, a successful transnational film production company based in Beijing, remarked that he was disappointed with the Chinese film market. He explained: “Most Chinese are still busy fulfilling their *basic life needs* [emphasis mine] such as buying cars and houses, and going abroad. They are driven by a strong desire to become modern, and cultural consumption such as movies is not included in this project.”⁸ The conversation was conducted over lunch at the Schlotzsky’s Deli, a sandwich chain store from Texas, located inside the Guomao (China World Trade Center). Most of the customers around us were either foreigners or mixed groups comprising Westerners and Asians (both local and foreign), and the conversation was mostly in English. Bathed in the mild sunlight of late Spring, immersed in the fragrant smell of coffee, and enjoying delicious (and expensive) sandwiches served in American-style portions, it was easy to forget that we were in Beijing, and I almost nodded absent mindedly in response to the sales manager’s words. However, “basic life needs such as buying cars and houses, and going abroad” was an awkward phrase. Likely, these were basic needs for the Canadian film industry professional only. Most Beijingers would not classify buying cars and houses and going abroad as “basic needs.” Rather, these consumption practices were eagerly desired (as the film company manager commented) because they were significant components of wealth and status, and of a modern identity.

While disposable income has become a reality for most Chinese, huge economic disparities exist. The daily lives of the rich, including the business professionals working in the Beijing Central Business District, revolve around various consumption practices; this is the group that had already achieved “modernity” according to the Imar sales

⁸ Extract from a conversation between the author and the sales manager on May 30, 2001.

manager, and they regularly engaged in cultural consumption such as buying books or magazines and watching movies. Besides this small and economically privileged group, the majority of Chinese consumers remained, in the words of the Canadian Imar manager, “driven by a strong desire to become modern”. Some among this group, like the Chinese customers at Blue Lotus, were getting used to consumption and enjoying spending as a joy in itself; meanwhile others, like the villagers in Xijiang and migrant laborers, had such limited disposable income that they had to save diligently and reserve their consumption for special occasions (for example Miao New Year). New social order was produced from these differentiated consumption styles rooted in economic power.

Based on available disposable income, Chinese society could be conceived as a pyramid, comprising two levels divided according to criteria such as whether individuals had achieved “the basic needs necessary for modern subjectivity” referred to by the Canadian Imar manager. At the top are a very small group of those who have achieved their modern subjectivity, built their identities based on the commodities they have acquired, and quested after consumption power; meanwhile, at the bottom are a large group of those who are still strangers to spending money and are primarily seeking upward mobility. The small top level was dominated by the urban rich, while the massive base comprised the urban poor and the majority of the rural population. The different views of the ideal future held by Weiwei and Shifang, the housewife of a working class Beijing family living in Liulichang’s a hutong neighborhood, highlight the difference between the rich, seeking consumption power, and the poor, looking for upwards mobility.

In May 2003 I visited Weiwei, Luo Zhi's girlfriend and the only daughter of a successful entrepreneur and a "national rank" doctor, in Sydney, Australia where she was pursuing her graduate degree.⁹ While window shopping in a mall near her school she described her ideal life by saying it would mean "whenever I saw something I liked in the shops, I would be able to buy it without hesitation (*kandao shenme xihuande dongxi, jiu neng haobuyouyude maixialai*)." In contrast to Weiwei's consumption-embedded aspiration, Shifang's dream was much more class-oriented. When, during his last year of junior high school education, Baoyu, Shifang's only son, independently decided to attend a comprehensive high school (*zonghe zhongxue*) rather than attempting to enter a privileged high school (*zhongdian zhongxue*),¹⁰ although attendance at which would improve his prospects of entering a university, Shifang was extremely distressed. She cried and complained, "What can he do without a college degree? What can he do? We lost our chance of getting an education (because of the Cultural Revolution)! Why is he giving up himself? (*Mei shang daxue tan neng zuo shenmene? Neng zuo shenmene? Women yijing shiqu nianshu de jihui le! Ta weishenme yao fangqi ziji ne?*)" Shifang remarked that all she wished for her son was that a good education would free him from poverty.

Comparing the consumers patronizing the Xijiang periodic market, the Chinese tourists "spending money" at Blue Lotus, the wealthy antique furniture shoppers in Beijing and those engaging in home remodeling in Beijing, the differences in frequency of consumption, amount of money spent and attitudes towards xiaofei identified them as

⁹ In short, an outstanding professional who is recognized, awarded and financially supported by the central government.

¹⁰ A Zhonghe Zhongxue is a high school with two educational goals. Some classes prepare students for the college entrance exam, while others teach technical skills such as computers, programming, electronics, etc., preparing students to pursue a technical career after graduation.

belonging to different social groups. The contrast between the hesitant but determined gestures and facial expression of the Xijiang father buying his son a 36 RMB jacket and the relaxed and care-free manner in which the Beijing white-collar worker talked about the new dress she had just bought for over 1000 RMB provided the clearest evidence of the economic and social differentiation between villages and cities, rural and urban areas and peasants and educated business professionals in the early 2000s. Material conditions based on commodities made solid, tangible and lasting statements regarding differentiated social statuses.

In arguing that differences in wealth, mediated by differentiated consumption patterns, resulted in social differentiation, I do not focus on how certain symbolic commodities gave their owners differentiated social statuses. Rather, this study emphasizes that differentiated economic conditions resulted in different material environments, that is different living styles, means of transportation, shopping places and accessible commodities, and food and leisure activities, giving subjects very different senses of a place (as illustrated by how business professionals and migrant laborers recognized the same place as Guomao and Dabeyiao, respectively) and of belonging to a community. Consequently, despite living in a single city or even a single district, economically differentiated residents lived in different social milieu and thus were socially differentiated.

Liulichang: a Center and Margin of the City

The final part of this chapter returns to the theme of contact zones and the impacts of both state policy and the changing global economy on social and spatial differentiation in Beijing by focusing on another specific district of Beijing, Liulichang, including a few key informants living there. This discussion will first review the observations and theorization of Saskia Sassen regarding economic globalization and urban transformation, which I found useful for understanding spatial and social changes in Liulichang, Beijing and even China.

Sassen's 'A New Geography of Centrality and Marginality'

Unlike mainstream economists and sociologists, Saskia Sassen (1988; 1991; 1999; 2006) focused on *production* in examining the influence of the global economy on the reconstruction of contemporary societies and communities. Departing from the usual assumptions regarding information technologies and the information economy, she posits that place still matters, and that economic globalization is witnessing the revival of cities and the emergence of “strategic places”, i.e., global cities, export processing zones, off-shore banking centers, and high-tech districts. Among these strategic places, Sassen focuses especially on global cities – major cities in developed countries that, through providing necessary infrastructure, act as the command centers of global corporations and have high densities of both international business professionals and labor migrants.

The other proposition of Sassen that is critical to the present discussion is her argument regarding an evolving new geography of the global economy focused on centrality and marginality. Sassen, among others (e.g., Castells 1989; 1996; 2000), argues that the global economy operates on a dispersed geographic system that transcends

traditional national boundaries and state bureaucracy. The old geography of centers and margins was frequently associated with developed, developing and underdeveloped countries, respectively. Sassen argues that, in the current period of economic globalization, “a new geography of centrality and marginality” is occurring within both developed countries and cities. She explains:

“This new geography assumes many forms and operates in many terrains, from the distribution of telecommunication facilities to the structure of the economy and of employment. Global cities become the sites of immense concentrations of economic power, while cities that were once major manufacturing centers suffer inordinate declines. Parallel inequalities develop inside cities. Professionals see their incomes rise to unusually high levels, while low- or medium-skilled workers see theirs sink. Financial services produce superprofits, while industrial services barely survive (Sassen 2006, 194).”

In addition to the sharp contrast between income level and industry, cities, particularly strategic cities within the global economy, also witness distinctly uneven development between districts, for example the sharp contrast between central business districts and the “inner cities”.

In short, while the rise of the global economy has witnessed cities become increasingly central in advanced economies, and the increasing importance of financial services, business districts, and international business professionals, it has also witnessed “peripheralization at the core”, namely the decline of manufacturing and industrial service centers in developed countries, the degeneration of “inner cities”, and the further devaluation of low- and middle-skilled workers, including those working in the leading sectors of an economy, who are often immigrant laborers, ethnic minorities, or women.

The global cities mentioned by Sassen are those few metropolises with the most advanced telecommunication infrastructure, which act as command centers for global firms; specifically, Sassen identified New York, London, and Tokyo as being global cities. Beijing differs from global cities defined by Sassen in some significant ways. First, regardless of its goal of becoming a leading global city, Beijing is not yet supported by or host to a major world financial market, and nor has it achieved the level of infrastructure necessary to sustain the global financial services sector. Consequently, Beijing has not yet achieved the status of a world financial and business command center like New York, London and Tokyo. Second, regardless of whether it is a global city, Beijing is above all the capital of China, a nation that still claims to be socialist and still has a powerful central government. The bureaucracy in Beijing is stronger than in other global cities. However, this apparent disadvantage – i.e., the powerful state bureaucracy – actually gives Beijing an edge, in comparison to Shanghai or Shenzhen, as a strategic place for the evolution of economic globalization in China. The physical proximity to central bureaus, policy makers and executors benefits the establishment of command and management functions of global firms in China. Third, unlike in the study of Sassen, Beijing did not witness the emergence of transnational labor migration and its associated multiplicity of cultures. Instead, with a huge domestic population living on the poverty line, Beijing not surprisingly witnessed significant domestic labor migration. These domestic labor migrants, generally moved from the countryside to the city, and from poorer western and inland regions to richer eastern and coastal provinces, in hopes of improving their economic prospects. Hence, labor migration in China was associated with emergent regional and urban-rural hierarchies, not with a multiplicity of transnational cultures.

Despite the differences between Beijing and the global city Sassen examined, I argue that the social differences emerging in Beijing still follow the pattern witnessed in other global cities, namely strong social and geographic polarization. Sassen's observation of significant increases in numbers of both high-income professionals and low-income migrant laborers is also observable in Beijing. Besides the polarized income groups comprising immigrants of both professional and manual labor, native residents are also increasingly dichotomized into a rich group and an underclass. Additionally, Sassen notes that, owing to these new inequalities, global cities also witnessed the creation of new social forms, for example gentrified neighborhoods and informal economies (Sassen 2006, 197). This observation also holds true in Beijing. For example, the Central Business District and the area near Beijing International Airport are undergoing rapid gentrification, while many laid-off workers of former state enterprises are unable to find work and thus are forced into the informal economy.

The remainder of this section focuses on another specific district of Beijing, Liulichang, and those who still live in this old hutong neighborhood. The objectives are to consider how economic globalization influences "the other residents", namely residents who do not participate directly in strategic sectors, of this globalizing city; to examine how new social forms are constituted as a result of new forms of inequality; and to determine whether an indigenous social order exists as a result of decades of Maoist education.

"The Life of the Real Ordinary Beijingers"

On a hot summer evening in 2001, Shifang, Baoyu, and myself rode bicycles around the Forbidden City enjoying the comparatively cooler outdoor air. We left their home in Liulichang, passed by Dashalar, Qianmen (the gate ordering the south end of Tian'anmen Square), then crossed Tiananmen Square and entered the Forbidden City before continuing to pedal along the City Moat and around nearby hutong (alleyways between courtyard houses). On the street, we encountered other families, young lovers, and teenagers, all of whom were either pedaling their bicycles or strolling leisurely along and, like us, enjoying the comparatively cool evening breeze. On the sidewalks, elders sat on low stools or squatted occasionally waved their fans as they chatted with families and neighbors. Young children ran around shouting and playing. All three of us seemed engrossed in both the silencing silhouettes of the Imperial City and the happy sounds of the streets, and for a long while we simply rode side by side in quiet appreciation. After a while, Shifang sighed and said reminiscently: "This is the life of the real ordinary Beijingers (*zhe caishi zhenzheng Beijing laobaixing de shenghuo*).” Shifang explained: in the past, sitting on the street to chat with neighbors while enjoying the cool evening breeze was the best time of the day in summer, in fact there was little other leisure available then, and certainly no television.

I was impressed by her emphasis on justifying the authenticity of this evening's "Beijingness" quality and on her use of the term *laobaixing*. The word *laobaixing* is a legacy of the imperial time and refers to the ordinary people, namely those who were neither members of the royal family nor state officials. As Shifang identified with this particular leisure life, she classified herself as a *laobaixing* – an ordinary resident of this city. In fact, Shifang frequently used the terms *laobaixing* or *xiao laobaixing* (little

laobaixing) to refer to herself and her family. The interesting question is the identity of the dominant ruling group to which Shifang identifies herself as subject given that the imperial era has passed. Who is the dominant “other” in reference to the *laobaixing*? The various sensual impressions that defined the evening, including the view of the silhouettes of the Imperial City, the caress of the evening breeze, and the noises of old bicycles, chatting people, and shouting kids, returned Shifang to her childhood and youth. Through these impressions Shifang tried to show her listener the “authentic” but disappearing Beijing.

Shifang, her husband Qingyuan, and their son Baoyu, lived in a little courtyard house in a small hutong off Liulichang Main Street. The house had been bought by Qingyuan’s great grandfather – a successful trader from Shandong province – as a residence for use on his business trips to Beijing. However, Qingyuan’s grandparents lost their fortune, including the family’s estates in Shandong, during the turmoil of the early Republican period and the Sino-Japanese War (the Second World War). The family fled to Beijing to seek refugee from war and had lived in this courtyard house ever since. Qingyuan was born and grew up in this Beijing hutong. Shifang’s natal family came from Old Beijinger stock (*lao Beijingren*, which refers to families who have lived in Beijing for generations, usually since the imperial era) and lived in the Jingyuchi neighborhood not far from her marital family, with both families living in the old Outer City (*Waicheng*) adjacent to the South border of the old Imperial City.

Shifang and Qingyuan were in their late thirties and early forties, respectively, in 2000 and belong to the generation that had grown up in the “new China (*Xin Zhongguo*, or Communist China)” and seen their childhood and teenage years dominated by the

Cultural Revolution. They were both deprived of a complete education because of the political and social disruption of the Cultural Revolution. Because of his family background as merchants and landowners, Qingyuan, a few years older than Shifang, was “sent down” to suburban Beijing with his mother to do farm work when he was about seven years old. This period was his only experience of living somewhere other than the courtyard house where he was born. Following the Cultural Revolution, Qingyuan and Shifang worked at a state-owned factory in Beijing, where they met and got married. In the early 1990s, when the Dengist economic reform accelerated, their factory was shut down and they, like many others nationwide, became laid-off workers (*xiagang gongren*). In 2000, Shifang was working as a senior assistant in the housekeeping department of a hotel in southern Beijing, while Qingyuan worked on a casual basis for a Beijing newspaper. When Qingyuan’s work was stable, together they could make around 2000 RMB (250 USD) per month. However, the hotel where Shifang worked experienced financial difficulties and was looking for foreign buyers. Hence, Shifang faced constant threat of losing her job, which was the main source of family income. The story of Qingyuan and Shifang is not exceptional but rather reflects the shared experiences of a generation of urban Chinese whose personal fates were shaped by the political campaigns of the communist nation state.

What were jeopardized in 2000 were not only their family income but also their place of residence, and thus their identity as both *laobaixing* (ordinary inhabitants of the former imperial city) and *lao Beijingren* (old Beijingers). The courtyard house where they lived was very small, but was located at the heart of old Beijing, within walking distance of the Forbidden City and right in Liulichang, the renowned antique quarter that

had been specializing in ancient books and other essentials for calligraphy (i.e., paper, ink, inkstones and brushes) since the early Qing Dynasty. Liulichang comprised two worlds: one was the Main Street – formally, Liulichang East Avenue (Liulichang Dongdajie) and Liulichang West Avenue (Liulichang Xidajie) – which was flanked by antique shops and often crowded with domestic and foreign tourists; the other was the old hutong neighborhood that sprawled behind the Main Street and was inhabited by ordinary and mostly poor Beijingers. Since the economic reform, Liulichang the antique market has attracted both professional and amateur antique buyers and dealers from around the world, and became one of the major tourist sites in Beijing. However, the profits earned by the businesses on Liulichang Main Street have not benefited the residents of the immediate neighborhood, except for the few antique dealers that live there. On the contrary, the main street and the surrounding neighborhood are drifting apart economically.

Since 1979, with the goal of promoting cultural tourism in Beijing and Liulichang, the Main Street, supported by the municipal and district governments, has undergone several major renovations. All of the façades of the antique stores flanking the street were rebuilt in a conspicuously traditional Chinese architectural style (incorporating blue brick [*qingzhuan*], grey roof tiles, glazed stone sculpture, etc.), presenting the street in the style of a Qing-dynasty market street (*jieshi*). In contrast, the neighborhood of hutong and courtyard houses surrounding the main street was largely ignored. Most of the residents of this neighborhood were low-income families like Shifang and Qingyuan. Without proper maintenance, the majority of the old courtyard houses in the neighborhood had fallen into dangerous condition, with rotten wooden structures, cracked walls, leaking roofs, and weeds filling the cracks in the roof tiles and courtyards. The

alleyways were also poorly maintained and had become muddy and uneven and were sometimes filled with noxious smells drifting from the poorly drained public toilets, upon which the residents depended given that their old courtyard houses lacked toilets of their own. Besides the dilapidated housing and lack of amenities, crowding is also a problem. During the Cultural Revolution, the private family residences in this area were confiscated by the state and occupied by multiple unrelated families. The original families were forced to share their houses with strangers, often resulting in new rooms being haphazardly built in courtyard areas to house a greater number of people.

Shifang and Qingyuan's courtyard house was no exception. This little courtyard house was inhabited not only by Shifang's family but also Qingyuan's elder parents, and another unrelated family of three. A tiny kitchen that only one person could enter at a time had been added to the west side of the courtyard. The remainder of the courtyard was almost completely occupied by a pomegranate tree and piles of coals. Although the house was in poor condition, it provided Shifang's family with a home, neighborhood, and familiar way of life. Therefore, when the municipal and district governments proposed the relocation of Liulichang residents to enable the Liulichang Cultural Industrial Park (Liulichang Wenhua Chanye Yuanqu) urban development project to go ahead, Shifang and her family were extremely stressed.

"Liulichang Cultural Industrial Park" is an urban redevelopment project proposed by the Beijing municipal government and the Xuanwu District government in 2000 which involved rebuilding Liulichang into a cultural theme park specializing in antique, art and handicraft markets and displaying living culture from traditional hutong and courtyard houses. Specifically, the project was to involve renovating famous antique shops and

book stores; restoring culturally significant hutong structures and demolishing and rebuilding old and dangerous courtyard houses. The residents living within the proposed theme park area were to be relocated to new suburban communities.

When Shifang and her family first heard about this project from newspapers, they could not decide if it was good news or not. Relocation was tempting since it would mean moving into a new apartment equipped with a bathroom, toilet, and heating system in a high-rise building (*loufang*), something they had always dreamed about. Moreover, their courtyard house was literally falling apart and would probably become unsafe to live in within a few years. However, since the courtyard house had been bought by Qingyuan's great grandfather, any monetary compensation for being relocated would have to be split among Qingyuan and his six cousins, even if only the family of Qingyuan still lived in the house. Thus, relocation could result in them losing their home and not having enough money to buy a new apartment. Furthermore, relocation would lead to them being uprooted from the old hutong neighborhood and culture they had grown up in, losing the intimate relationship with old Beijing that they had always taken for granted, and losing their identity as both Little Laobaixing and Old Beijingers.

Liulichang as a "Contact Zone"

Liulichang is an intriguing place, simultaneously being part of an "inner city" and a strategic place for the development of the global economy in Beijing. By "inner city", I mean that Liulichang and, more generally, the old Outer City area (comprising the majority of the Xuanwu and Chongwen Districts) is the older, central residential area inhabited by ordinary and poorer Beijingers; and is largely composed of run-down,

low-income residential neighborhoods, as typified by the Liulichang hutong neighborhood. Being part of an inner city, Liulichang “the run-down residential area” was, unlike the Central Business District (CBD), generally excluded from the practice of global economy in Beijing and marginalized in the process of globalization. However, with the emergence of cultural tourism as a major development strategy for cities, regions, and countries, Liulichang “the antique quarter”, has become a strategic place within the global economy, assuming a role similar to that of the Central Business District as a place where the global meets the local.

The case of Liulichang and Shifang’s family demonstrates the multiple social and spatial scales of new centers and margins of Beijing, resulting from the impacts of global economy and state policy: on one level, Liulichang and the Xuanwu District are margins of Beijing while the Central Business District is the center; on another level, Liulichang Antique Market is the center of globalizing Beijing, and the immediate surrounding neighborhood comprises the margins. While the antique dealers made large profits from being active participants in the global economy, the ordinary residents living off Liulichang Main Street were laid-off workers of state-owned enterprises and joined the low-income stratum. Besides, while a state supported cultural industry had emerged that saw value in preserving the lifestyle of courtyard house residents and thus enhancing the value of the Liulichang Antique Quarter, in reality this industry socially and economically marginalized the residents themselves.

Although Liulichang can be theoretically divided into the run-down courtyard neighborhood and the Antique Quarter, or into the Main Street and the residential neighborhood in the surrounding alleys, these two worlds actually share a single

continuous physical space. For the low-income residents of Liulichang neighborhood, the Main Street was still an important social space. The local residents were not intimidated by the renovated antique shops or groups of foreign tourists in the way that migrant laborers felt threatened and excluded by the fancy shops and impressive buildings of the Central Business District. Everyday, Shifang and her neighbors pedaled and walked through the Main Street to work, to market, and just to go to the toilet; at twilight, vendors sold “stinky tofu” (*choudoufu*) on this street; after school, Baoyu and his schoolmates chatted and exchanged computer games on the street corner; all day long, neighborhood elders would sit silently on low stools and watch passers-by. Though assigning the same space different meanings, namely renowned antique market or home community, tourists and residents shared the space of Liulichang. The combination of physical proximity and sharp social and economic polarization between these two groups makes Liulichang an interesting “contact zone” where the global meets the local. One illustrative example was provided by Liulichang’s traditional food market.

The traditional food market where Liulichang residents shop for their daily necessities was located in Yanshou Street, the hutong at the east end of the Liulichang area. The market was nothing exceptional and, like most food markets in the city, was crowded, muddy, slippery, smelly (both good and bad smells) and noisy. However, the market was also a frequent “bonus” stop for foreign tour groups, who would drop by after visiting antique shops in Liulichang Main Street to experience “the typical life of ordinary Beijingers,” as introduced by tour guides clutching megaphones. Shifang often stopped off the market on her way home after work to buy food for dinner. For research purposes I accompanied Shifang on one of these shopping trips. A tour group was

crowding around the entrance to the market and making it almost impossible for Shifang to get to the part of the market where she wished to do her shopping. Taking care to avoid the tour guide's megaphone, Shifang was unable to avoid being captured by the flash lights from several cameras and camcorders. I wondered how Shifang felt about the tourists' careless behavior. She simply smiled shyly and said nothing.

Compared to the dramatic changes happening in Beijing, Shifang's lifestyle had remained little changed since the Reform Era. Still, macro socioeconomic transformations, including the state policy of "socialist marketization" and the development of a global economy, had redefined her lifestyle as a historical and cultural showcase.

Examining the experience of Shifang's family and other ordinary Beijing residents, and the changes occurring in Liulichang is intended to achieve three objectives: first, to demonstrate how "the other" residents of this globalizing city are influenced by economic globalization; second, to reflect ethnographically on the concern of Sassen with how new forms of inequality are constituted in new social forms (Sassen 2006, 197); and, third, to consider the emergence of a new indigenous social order – i.e., how various groups position themselves socially in this aspiring and transforming city.

Although Shifang and her neighbors were not active participants in the "strategic sectors" of the global economy developing in Beijing, they were not a "neutral," "unmarked," or unaffected group in the processes of economic reform and globalization. Instead, they are "the other residents" of this aspiring global city. The case of Shifang, Qingyuan and their neighbors reveals that China's economic reform and the advance of economic globalization are two aspects of a single process. Affected by both state

policies and political campaigns (e.g., the Cultural Revolution, closures of state-owned factories, opening-up of private business, and the reform of social welfare policies for urban residents) as well as the development of a global economy (e.g., the arrival of foreign investors and overvalored strategic industries and professionals, foreign buyers of domestic businesses, and dramatically increasing international consumption of “traditional Chinese culture and styles”), Shifang’s family and other low-income residents of declining hutong neighborhoods were marginalized culturally, socially, and economically.

The case of Shifang’s family and Liulichang demonstrates that new social forms are perceived as resulting from the citywide socioeconomic transformation and an associated increase in inequality. Like many others, Shifang’s family obtained a new identity as members of the lower class and had to become re-acquainted with their community (i.e., as a world renowned tourist site) not because of their own actions but because of their inability to respond to change. Unlike business professionals or domestic labor migrants, low-income Old Beijingers like Shifang did not migrate. They still lived in or near the neighborhoods where they had grown up, maintained a lifestyle similar to that of their parents, and continued to be classified as the “ordinary” residents of the city. Nevertheless, these Liulichang hutong residents lost their identity and “home” by simply staying in the same place and maintaining their old lifestyle. Compared to the spectacular development of the Central Business District and the gentrification of the suburban community near the Airport Expressway, the residential hutong neighborhood of the Xuanwu District has become a run-down “inner city”. Specifically, Liulichang, the immediate area inhabited by Shifang’s family has been redefined as a world renowned

antique and tourist quarter, with the residents of the surrounding Liulichang community having been rendered invisible and their interests largely ignored. Unlike the rich entrepreneurs and professionals working for the global financial services industry, Shifang and similar low-skilled workers with limited education were laid off in huge numbers by former state-owned factories, and many of them, including Qingyuan, were pushed into the informal economy as casual hour workers.

Shifang, Qingyuan, and their families are aware of having become the poor in Beijing. They are inferior “laobaixing” relative to the rich professionals capable of conspicuous consumption. Daily consumption practice is a major terrain through which Laobaixing like Shifang’s family are made aware of their new social inferiority. While the new rich in Beijing are buying suburban houses and private sedans, enjoying dining out and shopping at worldwide brand name chain stores, and taking vacations abroad, most of the income of Shifang and her family goes to cover food and other necessities such as utilities, tuition and taxes. They lived in unheated rooms in a house without a toilet, almost never dined out, seldom used public transportation such as buses and the subway (instead riding their bicycles nearly everywhere), and their major form of entertainment was watching television in the evenings. Their last family vacation had been almost ten years previously, to Beidaihe, a seaside resort not far from Beijing. Moreover, while mobile phones were a necessity for white collar workers, and were widely possessed even among college students, Shifang’s family only had a pager. When I chatted with Shifang in her crowded living room in the evenings, she repeatedly expressed her envy for those who could afford to take full advantage of the modernity

and urbanity of Beijing, and her desperation to improve her social conditions and live a better life.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed emergent urban stratification in Beijing driven by the intertwined processes of the Dengist economic reform and global economic development. The social inequality emerging in urban China as a result of consumption was examined as a new and critical terrain for identity production in the late socialist era. At the beginning and end of this chapter, an ethnographic focus was trained on two distinctive places in Beijing, the Central Business District in Chaoyang District and the Liulichang antique market and hutong neighborhood in Xuanwu District. These two places were conceived as “contact zones” for different classes of residents, as well as being where the global meets the local. Addressing the social differentiation within the city using a spatial concept (contact zone), I argued and demonstrated that a focus on space can help identify interesting intersections in the creation of different kinds of identities. Examining consumption practices and associated language in the historical and cultural context of China, this chapter attempted to illustrate how consumer identity and related social differentiation carried a Maoist and Chinese Communist legacy.

In the following chapter (Chapter Four), I shift my focus to address emergent differences and uneven development among various places. This provides yet another perspective for examining Beijing, this time an external one. Subsequently, in Chapter

Five, I will demonstrate how migrant laborers serve as mediators for both the scope of differences – i.e. differences within a city and among places – and for unifying a fragmented nation.

4

**MASS MEDIA, URBAN-RURAL DIFFERENCES AND IMAGINING THE
CAPITAL**

In contrast to the last chapter, which examined Beijing from perspectives within the city and focused on an emerging urban social hierarchy, this chapter examines Beijing from perspectives outside the city to address the changing relations between the capital and the nation-state. The aim is to analyze the capital from other but equally critical perspectives. This chapter examines the following issues: how people “elsewhere” imagine Beijing; the crucial roles played by the mass media in this process of imagination; what these diverse mass mediated images of Beijing demonstrate regarding changing urban-rural relationships in China; and how changing international, political and economic conditions affect the media industry and urban-rural divisions in China.

Imagining Beijing

The official English website of the Beijing Olympics introduced Beijing as follows in 2005:

“Beijing, a fast changing city with a history going back 3,000 years, is an amazing mix of modernization and historical legacy. As you sip a cappuccino at Starbucks Café nestled under the golden roofs of the Imperial Palace or take a rickshaw trip

through the high-rise buildings in the central business center, you will find the seamless union of the city's past and present.”¹¹

Indeed, the official Beijing Olympics website presented virtual visitors with a Beijing that was colorful, joyful, lively, modern, and full of attractive history. The material presented on this website expressed the official image of the capital.

Siyen Fei, in a study of perceptions of Nanjing as a Ming capital as demonstrated by maps of the city, insightfully remarked that portraits of capital cities are seldom about the capitals themselves, but rather are about the nations where they are located.¹² The same applies to the official images of Beijing. Official images of Beijing not only represent Beijing but also the ideal nation state. As state policies repeatedly emphasize, China aspires to become a modern and internationalized nation. Beijing thus is conceived as a showcase of the policies of Economic Reform and Opening-Up. Accordingly, official portraits of Beijing have frequently described the city as either “a modernized international city” (*xiandaihua guoji chengshi*) or “a truly international big city (*zhenzheng de guoji da dushi*)”, both of which entail a city possessing advanced technologies, high-rise buildings, rapid mass transportation systems and bustling shopping and business districts. However, despite the emphasis on modernization and internationalization, the quote from the Olympics website above indicates that official images of the nation and the capital emphasize both modernization and Chinese cultural

¹¹ This paragraph was posted on the official website of 2008 Beijing Olympics (http://210.75.208.159/eolympic/xbj/xbj_index.htm) in 2005. By 2008 the paragraph and associated page had been removed. “The Starbucks in the Forbidden City” made headlines at the beginning of 2007 after a China Central Television (CCTV) English anchor criticized it as “insulting the Chinese civilization”, and the shop was closed in July of that year.

¹² From “From Emperor’s Capital to Southern Metropolis: The Place-Making and Re-making of Ming Nanjing,” a conference paper presented by Fei at the conference titled “Guoyanfanhua: Ming-Qing Jiangnan De Shenghuo Yu Wenhua Guoji Xueshu Yantaohui” at Academia Sinica in Taipei, Taiwan on December 19, 2003.

heritage. This dual emphasis indicates the importance policy makers placed on “Chinese characteristics” when pursuing international standards.

As a capital city, “what kind of place Beijing is becoming” is not only decided by Beijingers. On the one hand, every aspect of Beijing, from urban planning to investment in the city, regulation of migrants, mass media, and foreign influences, is affected and manipulated by the nation-state. On the other hand, images of Beijing are produced through interactions among the state, Beijing residents, and people elsewhere – including both Chinese and foreigners. Portraits of Beijing drawn from the outside demonstrate not only images of a developing urban space in China but also of the Chinese nation.

Being a typical Taiwanese, before my ethnographic research trips to Beijing my image of Beijing was predominantly shaped by novels and the Taiwanese media. I imagined Beijing to be as it was portrayed by novelists who grew up in Beijing and fled to Taiwan during the Civil War, namely as having a rich local culture, including tasty local snacks, friendly and outgoing neighbors, a dusty environment, a bitter winter, and winding alleyways. Simultaneously, I imagined it as a grayish and depressing city dominated by the all-pervasive presence of the Chinese Communist Party, as presented in Taiwanese and most Western media during the Cold War period. Consequently, the modern and flourishing Beijing I encountered along Chang’an Grand Avenue in 2000 took some time to get used to. Throughout my fieldwork, I often gained some comfort from immersing myself in old hutong neighborhoods. While I searched for “the old and local community of Beijing,” tourists were captivated by the Oriental charms of the Forbidden City, Summer Palace, and Beijing Opera shows held in tea houses, and international businessmen were impressed and comforted by familiar urban settings that

included burgeoning skyscrapers, international hotel chains, convention and exhibition centers, high-speed transportation networks and burgeoning night entertainment districts. As images of Beijing as a cultural and political center became less dominant and the city increasingly came to be seen as an internationalized business center, images of China were inevitably also affected. For different peoples, Beijing has distinct realities. Beijing is not a homogenous city but comprises numerous different senses and places. How do others see the efforts of state officials and of the business and intellectual elite to make Beijing one of the great cities in the world? For those who neither occupy a privileged position in Beijing nor even live there, is Beijing as the national center a critical other in identity production? The following incorporates perspectives regarding the identity of Beijing from both outside the city and from its periphery to address the remaking of Beijing under the Chinese economic reform, as well as economic globalization. External perspectives on the capital can be used to analyze not only how Beijing is imagined but also how people in various places position themselves and their localities in relation to Beijing. Examining Beijing as it is viewed by people elsewhere, this study attempts to demonstrate the making of Beijing in relation to the rest of China during a period of economic globalization and state initiated economic reform.

From Xi'an: Imagining the Capital/ the Nation

For people in Xi'an – the capital of Shaanxi province and a famous ancient capital of China, Beijing is a critical external influence on their local identity – i.e., who they are and what kind of place their city is. The importance of Beijing in their cultural imagination was made clear to me almost as soon as I relocated to Xi'an in December

2000 to complete the second stage of my fieldwork. The airport serving Xi'an was located in Xianyang, the ancient capital of the Qin Dynasty during 221-207 B.C., and now a middle size industrial city an hour by bus from downtown Xi'an. On the smoky and stuffy bus from Xianyang to Xi'an, I chatted with the middle-aged woman seated next to me while occasionally looking outside to snatch a glimpse of the tombs of the emperors and empresses of the glorious Han and Tang Dynasties (206 B.C. to 195 A.D. and 618-907 AD) as they passed by the window in a blur. Soon after we began talking, she commented: "According to your appearance (*yangzi*) and your mandarin, you must be from Beijing, right?" In Beijing, the fact that I did not speak with a drawl that bestowed a distinctive 'r' sound to the end of many words generally revealed that I was from the south. However, when I traveled outside Beijing many people asked me if I was a Beijinger because of my "standard mandarin" (*biaozhunde putonghua*). In fact the "standard mandarin" they were referring to was similar to the accent of news reporters and anchors of CCTV (China Central Television), but very different from that of native Beijingers. The standard mandarin used in broadcasting has seemingly been identified as a feature of the nation and, hence, the capital. After I confirmed that I was moving from Beijing to Xi'an, she immediately inquired: "What makes a young girl like you leave Beijing for Xi'an alone? What are you doing in Xi'an? Don't you think Beijing is a better place to live?" She then advised me that despite knowing no Shaanxi dialect, I could easily pass as someone who had lived in Xi'an for a long time since Xi'an had many new or long-time domestic immigrants who do not speak the local dialect, for example scholars relocated by the state during the 1950s and their children, and college graduates who stayed in Xi'an to work after graduation.¹³ "Just do not tell people you are from

¹³ Xi'an is famous as a "city of universities" owing to its many centers of higher learning.

Beijing. *Do not make people interested in you* [emphasis mine]. Xi'an can be dangerous sometimes," she emphasized. Why would Xi'aners be interested in someone from Beijing? I soon learned that Beijing was a magic word for starting a conversation in Xi'an.

Xi'an is most commonly introduced as "the ancient capital of thirteen dynasties (Shisan Chao Gudu)". Given the enormous pride in the past of their city as the ancient capital, and their desire to reinstate this past glory, the people of Xi'an are inclined to take Beijing ahead of any other city as a reference in constructing local identity. On the one hand, having been the Chinese capital for about 2000 years – much longer than Beijing – and being the legendary place of origin of Han Chinese culture, Xi'aners believe that their city has an unparalleled cultural richness (*wenhua diyun*), unrivaled even by Beijing. On the other hand, despite sharing a similar background to Beijing as a political and cultural center of China, Xi'an has experienced a very different development trajectory during the past century, including the Reform Era. After all, the history of Xi'an as an imperial capital and one of the earliest "world cities" is now almost 1100 years in the past. In the 1920s and 1930s, Xi'an was simply a decaying small city in remote Northwestern China. Xi'an as an ancient capital was reconstructed only after the Reform Era, particularly following the discovery of the Qin Dynasty Terracotta Warriors in the mid 1970s – roughly coinciding with the beginning of the Reform Era. As several Xi'an scholars and media professionals observed: "the city was a place forgotten since the end of the Han and Tang dynasties." Given the history of the two places, the comparison between Xi'an and Beijing always evokes feelings of both pride and forlorn nostalgia in Xi'aners.

Whenever people in Xi'an learned that I was studying Beijing and had spent a period living there, they would eagerly ask: "Beijing is a prosperous city, isn't it? How different is Xi'an from Beijing?" Unlike the relationship between major metropolises, such as between Beijing and Shanghai or between Shanghai and Shenzhen, the relationship between Xi'an and Beijing was not competitive. Instead, Beijing was simultaneously conceived as both its future and its past – a modern Chinese metropolis and a center of Chinese civilization. Beijing represented everything that Xi'an used to have and wished to restore. Residents of Xi'an conceived Beijing both as the embodiment of the nation and the future of their own city. Positioning themselves as the heirs of authentic Han Chinese culture, elite Xi'aners cannot help but pay enormous attention to national affairs (*guojia dashi*). However, given the reality that Xi'an was less developed than coastal cities – and even less-developed than Chengdu, the emerging metropolis of Western China in Sichuan province - they inevitably feel inferior and dissatisfied with their city. This general discontent with Xi'an was reflected in the questions I was repeatedly asked from my first bus trip after arriving at the airport: "What brings you to Xi'an? What are you doing here? Why don't you stay in Beijing?"

I was surprised that putting down Xi'an was almost invariably a feature of my conversations with local people, including formal and informal interviews with my informants. My experience was that even residents of economically and environmentally disadvantaged rural areas were less dissatisfied (or at least expressed less dissatisfaction) than those of Xi'an. Taxi drivers complained about the constant traffic jams and inefficient ring-road system, blaming the mayor and provincial governor for being incapable. Hotel managers complained that despite washing and painting the walls of the

hotel at six month intervals, regular sandstorms and serious air pollution meant that the walls were perpetually dusty. In most places I have been to in China, the lower and lower-middle classes have been the main source of discontent. However, in Xi'an the educated middle and upper-middle classes were also vocal critics. Additionally, when these educated Xi'aners expressed their discontent with their city, they often drew a contrast with Beijing.

Jia Pingwa, one of the most famous contemporary Shaanxi novelists known for his novel "Abandoned Capital (Feidu)", once told a story of a personal experience in Beijing that vividly epitomized the contradictory sense of superiority and inferiority felt by intellectuals and professionals from Xi'an. When Jia first visited Beijing, he asked directions from a middle aged Beijinger, asking: "Comrade, how can I go to Tianqiao of your Beijing?" After giving detailed directions, the man also gave Jia some advice, saying:

"According to your accent you are from Xi'an, right? It is not easy for you to make a trip from such a remote area. You should take a good look around [Beijing]. However, I should tell you: Next time when you want to ask directions, you should not say 'your Beijing'. Beijing is ours, but it is also yours. Beijing belongs to people nationwide. If you want to ask, you should say: 'Comrade, how can I go to Tianqiao of our capital?'"

For Jia the point of this story lay in his sadness that Xianers had no idea that Xi'an was considered a remote place by people from other provinces (waisheng) (Jia Pingwa 1999).

In May 2000, after a two-week trip to a village in Northern Shaanxi (Shaanbei), I stopped by Xi'an for a week to prepare for the extended period of fieldwork that I planned to conduct there starting from December of that year. It was my second visit to

Xi'an. Having just arrived from a dry and dusty village in a remote corner of the loess plateau of Northern Shaanxi, a place where even plant life was scarce, I found the city, with its crowded main streets flanked by numerous shops and street vendors, unbelievably affluent. Consequently, when I met later that evening with a group of five magazine editors, writers, television program producers, and website editors, I was surprised to hear them eagerly ask: "What do you come here for? What could Xi'an give you? Why don't you stay in Beijing?" In the subsequent three-hour conversation in that smoky café of a hotel in southern Xi'an, they reiterated that Xi'an is a city "too old, too conservative, too depressed and too limited" for aspiring and ambitious people. They all shared a dream of leaving Xi'an. Furthermore, I could not help but notice that Beijing was their shared dream destination for migration. Chen Guanyi, the television program producer, made it clear: "The key concern that prevents us from leaving is the social and economic benefits associated with our household register (*hukou*). Those who are capable, have enough money, and have no family obligations (*jialei*) have all left for Beijing (*shang Beijing*)."¹⁴ Since they all had state-assigned jobs in Xi'an, leaving Xi'an would have meant giving up their assigned housing, state education for their children, and guaranteed medical care and other benefits.¹⁵ In this particular get-together, as in many subsequent conversations with the intellectual elite in Xi'an, many of them described Xi'an in quite abstract terms as a "dispirited (*tuitang*)" place. In contrast, they saw Beijing as far more promising because of its ample external resources – i.e., foreign

¹⁴ Here the informant used the word "*shang* (up or go)" instead of "*qu* (go)". *Shang* is used to indicate a movement to a more prosperous place, i.e. often a place with a higher administrative level. In contrast, when going to a place with a lower administrative level one would use the word "*xia* (down or go)" instead, as in "*xiangxiang*," go to the countryside.

¹⁵ In fact, Chen Guanyi, later went to Beijing (between May and December 2000) to work as a content editor for the famous website eLong.com, which targeted urban white-collars. However, when I moved to Xi'an at the end of 2000, he had already returned to Xi'an, saying he could no longer stand the "sissy" attitudes of the eLong editors in particular and the Beijing white-collar class in general.

investment – and stronger economic environment for supporting the development of cultural industries. While I had no direct evidence for why Beijing was their imagined destination, I believed it was less because Beijing was the national capital than because Beijing was *another* cultural capital in China. When discussing Shanghai of the 1930s, Leo Lee suggested that “...if cosmopolitanism means an abiding curiosity in “looking out” – locating oneself as a cultural mediator at the intersection between China and other parts of the world – then Shanghai in the 1930s was the cosmopolitan city par excellence, ... (Lee 1999, 315).” Taking inspiration from Lee’s definition of cosmopolitanism, the determination of intellectual elite I met in Xi’an in 2000 to “look out at Beijing” could be termed “Beijing-ism” or more precisely “Capital-ism”. These intellectual elite located themselves as mediators between Beijing and Xi’an, or between present Xi’an and its past and future. Imagining Beijing thus was a key part of the daily lives of the intellectual elite in Xi’an.

The tendency of Xi’aners to “look out at Beijing” was also demonstrated in their television viewing habits. Very different from what I observed in Beijing, television watching was not only a major leisure activity for most Xi’aners, but for many was almost their only significant leisure activity. In 2000, I stayed for a week with a couple who were both retired professors. Every day after waking up around 6:30am, the husband would immediately turn on the TV and watch the news on either CCTV or Phoenix Satellite TV (a Satellite TV station invested by Mainland Chinese interests but based in Hong Kong). He would then continue watching until going to bed between 10 and 11 pm. His main interests were national news on CCTV and current affairs programs, including discussion panel shows on Phoenix TV dealing with Hong Kong and Taiwan. Sometimes,

he pulled up a low-stool, sat immediately in front of the TV screen, and became totally engrossed in the news analysis; sometimes, he watched while reclining on a leather sofa and chatted casually with his wife. He seldom left home during the week I was there, and while he was physically located in the cozy living room of a university dormitory in Xi'an, the huge amount of time he spent engrossed in national news led me to believe that his imaginary life was lived from the perspective of Beijing and the state. Our topics of conversation over dinner supported this belief, with the conversation always dealing with the prospects of China, the changes in Beijing, and the relationship with Taiwan.

I soon found that this retired professor, with his addiction to national news and updates from the capital, was not unique in Xi'an. Zhu Yun, another retired university professor who I visited frequently, was also an avid television news watcher. Television news was the constant background to our meals and discussions. Besides news on CCTV and Phoenix TV, he also enjoyed news broadcast by Yunnan Television, Yunnan being the province where he had grown up and lived before being relocated by the state (along with many other educated youth) in the 1950s. In Xi'an, many teachers and professionals had undergone a similar experience of being relocated by the state. Although these people had lived in Xi'an for more than four decades, they seemed more or less dissociated from the city around them. Zhu Yun and his wife did not speak Shaanxi dialect, and despite living only a twenty-minute bus ride from the downtown area, the area enclosed by the old city walls, they had not "entered the city (*jincheng*)" (i.e. been within the old city walls) for more than a decade. Instead, they were attached to only their work-unit communities – the university Zhu Yun worked for – and an imagined nation-state. The

sense among many Xi'an professionals of belonging to an imagined national community rather than the physical local community is intriguing and deserves further analysis.

Besides older intellectuals and professionals, other residents of Xi'an were also strongly interested in news and reports of the central state. One night I joined Brother Lu and his family for dinner. Brother Lu was a taxi driver in his forties who identified himself as a *Daobeiren*, being one of the Henan migrants living north of the railroad that cut through Xi'an.¹⁶ Our dinner happened to coincide with the annual meetings of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and National People's Congress (known as *Lianghui* or "Two Meetings"), an event held in March of each year that lasted for weeks. The entire family, with the exception only of the young daughter who was in fifth grade, concentrated on the, to me at least, extremely dry televised Annual Report of the Government and the subsequent press conference. Brother Lu pointed out the important political leaders as they appeared on screen and told me anecdotes about them. Though I believe that his enthusiastic introduction of political events and figures was partly motivated by my Taiwanese identity, I was still struck by his interest in national affairs and political events. Besides the Two Meetings, Brother Lu's family also watched the prime time *Xinwen Lianbo* (Joint Broadcasting News) for national news, but displayed little interest in Shaanxi provincial News.

¹⁶ Migrants from Henan province (Henan Ren) are a large minority in Xi'an. Many of these Henan families came to Xi'an to escape poverty, famine, flood, and war, especially during the late 1930s when the Chinese army deliberately let the Yellow River flood to halt the westwards advance of the Japanese army and also during the Three Year Famine (so called "*Sannian Ziran Zaihai*") of 1959-1961. They came along the Longhai Railway, and owing to their settling along the north side of the railway they came to be known as Daobei Ren (people from north of the railway). Even though they are no longer refugees and some even enjoy a respectable economic status, Daobei Ren, or Henan Ren, continue to be considered a low social status group in Xi'an. Brother Lu's Family lived in a central location in the northeast corner of the old walled city, south of the railway, and enjoyed a comfortable income. However, Brother Lu was in general unwilling to discuss his Henan origins.

The family of Doctor Zhang provided another example of the importance of the imagined national community for Xi'aners. Doctor Zhang and her engineer husband were in their forties and both had completed their higher education in Xi'an and remained living there since early adulthood. They lived with their only son in a comfortable three-bedroom apartment assigned by their work-unit. The family was representative of a typical upper-middle class professional family in Xi'an. The fifteen year old son would regularly challenge me with provocative questions about the political relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan. Being an outstanding student at the best junior high school in Xi'an, he planned to apply to study at the best scientific universities in Beijing and then pursue graduate education in the US. For a Xi'an born youth he seemed to have few ties to Xi'an, planning his future using national or even international reference points. In the spring of 2001, the period when I visited the family most frequently, a key national event was Beijing's bid to host the 2008 Olympics. Every evening, the news covered the most recent accomplishments of urban renewal projects in Beijing, the future development plans of Beijing, or activities held by people elsewhere in China to support Beijing's bid. This Olympics-related news was one of the few things that distracted the teenage son from asking my opinions on cross-strait political matters. Clearly he saw Beijing's successful hosting of the Olympics as a crucial demonstration of the status of China. In contrast to the reaction of her son, Doctor Zhang's comments regarding the Olympic news provided a rare glimpse of her identification with Xi'an. When the news reported how a motorcade conducting on a "10,000 Kilometer Drive to Support the Olympic Bidding Committee of Beijing", sponsored by the national General

Administration of Sport and China National Tourism Administration, was enthusiastically welcomed by people on its route, Doctor Zhang said matter-of-factly:

“To be honest, I do not genuinely support the application of Beijing. As a Chinese, I want to see the nation successful. However, I believe that if Beijing becomes the Olympic City, most of the national budget for the next few years will be invested in Beijing. The interests of other cities, including Xi’an, will be sacrificed.”

The strong interest of Xi’aners in participating in the “imagined national community”, as witnessed in their interest in political news, national affairs, and Beijing, had no parallel in Beijing itself, in major coastal cities such as Shanghai and Shenzhen, or in rural villages. I posit that the unique passion exhibited in Xi’an is related to the collective identity of Xi’an as a political and cultural center within China, even if it is an “abandoned” political center (as indicated in novelist Jia Pingwa’s famous Xi’an novel: *Feidu* or the Abandoned Capital). The gulf between the self-positioning of Xi’an (as a nationally important and irreplaceable city) and the harsh reality of sluggish urban and economic development created the desire to live, even just imaginatively, beyond Xi’an. In pursuing an imagined national identity, television was crucial for Xi’aners in remaining appropriately intimate with the state. In contrast, Beijingers gained a sense of belonging to the nation through their everyday routines. A bicycle tour through a traditional neighborhood, eating at restaurants frequented by national leaders, or looking out their windows at one of the numerous state institutes all provided them with the “state effect” necessary for producing their Beijing and Chinese identities.

From Heilongtan: Imagining Urbanization

Unlike Xi'an, where – affected by its unique local history – residents are more or less Beijing-centered, Beijing exerts little or no influence on the lives of many urban and rural Chinese. For residents of Shanghai, Shenzhen, Chengdu and other big cities, the impression of Beijing as a cultural, educational, and above all political center dilutes the reality that it is also a prosperous metropolis supported by flourishing commerce. Meanwhile, for people living predominantly in small towns and villages, Beijing is little more than a vague idea that does not affect their daily lives. For these people Beijing is not unlike any nearby big city or even some distant place overseas, differing mainly in being associated with certain national symbols, including Chairman Mao, Tian'anmen Square, the Great Hall of the People, and the Forbidden City. The contemporary Chinese Writer Han Shaogong described in his semi-fictional novel *A Dictionary of Maqiao* that in Maqiao, a remote Hunan village to which he was “sent down (*xiafang*)” by the state during the Cultural Revolution, people referred to all far away places as *yibian* (literally barbarian border), regardless of whether they were referring to the nearby county seat, the provincial capital, or the United States (Han Shaogong 1997, 195). The indifference to places “over there” – whether a distant capital or simply a larger town located nearby – is certainly neither unique to Maqiao nor fictional. For many rural Chinese, Beijing, together with other provincial capitals or nearby large cities, are considered collectively as vaguely urban places.

I visited Heilongtan with a group of Japanese visitors who had come to plant trees in May 2000. Heilongtan is an important temple located in Hongliutan village in the Yulin district of northern Shaanxi province.¹⁷ Heilongtan temple had been destroyed

¹⁷ For the ethnography of Heilongtan, see also the works of the anthropologists Luo Hongguang and Adam Yuet Chau.

during the Cultural Revolution, but a local leader named Wang has overseen its rebuilding since the 1980s. By 2000 the temple, though not yet magnificent, had reached a respectable size and become a local religious center. Managed by Wang, supported by donations from religious followers, and with assistance from scholars, environmentalists, and officials, Heilongtan organized unique ecological projects focused on tree-planting. The concentration of trees set the surrounding loess hills apart from the almost bare hills that characterized most of the nearby area. However, despite its religious and ecological distinctiveness, Heilongtan remained fundamentally like a typical Northern Shaanxi village: water and electricity were limited and precious resources, and hygiene facilities were extremely basic, comprising just a few holes in the ground. The spacious temple courtyard served as the center of social life for the villagers, particularly male adults and children. Throughout the day, groups of children ran and played near the temple, and men gathered around the courtyard to chat, smoke, or just sit and kill time.

Nobody I encountered during my short research trip in Heilongtan cared whether I was from Beijing, Taiwan, or the US. The distinctions between these three places seemed to matter little to them. Instead, I was automatically looked after as a friend of friends and as a young (a student is supposed to be young) girl traveling alone. Although a few of the local people I met had been to Beijing and other cities for business, for example picking up visitors or attending ecological conferences, most were typical peasants with limited mobility. When they talked about towns or “going to town” (*jincheng*) they were most often referring to nearby Zhenchuan Township, where they went to attend various markets, or to Yulin, the regional center, or the towns and big cities in central Shanxi

province across the Yellow River.¹⁸ Beijing as either a city or the capital was not important in their daily consciousness.

As a television audience, the people of Heilongtan also displayed very different preferences from audiences in Xi'an and Beijing. The temple had at least two television sets: one in the office where the temple offered fortune-reading (*jieqian*) services, and another in what seemed to be a spare meeting room. When the television in the Fortune Reading Room was turned on, children and men would cluster around to watch. However, in contrast to my observations elsewhere, the television viewers in the temple did not seem obsessed with television. Rather than watching a program closely they tended to watch for a few minutes and then disappear to the courtyard outside, where they would join others in smoking and chatting. Based on my limited observations, they preferred dramas broadcast by the Shanxi Television Channel and movies and variety shows from CCTV.¹⁹

Their preference for movies, TV series, local dramas, and variety shows was confirmed by the manager of Zhenchuan Cable Television Station, the television signal provider for Heilongtan. In an interview, the manager told me that the most popular channels in the Zhenchuan area were CCTV-6 (CCTV's movie channel), CCTV-3 (CCTV's variety show channel), and the local cable channel, which offered programs of traditional art forms with a local flavor (i.e., *qinqiang*, a traditional opera, in the case of Shaanxi) and four episodes of TV series per night (compared to the two episodes per

¹⁸ Yulin District is geographically much closer to Taiyuan, the capital of Shanxi province, than to Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi. Hence, Northern Shaanxi has closer social and economic relations with Shanxi province, than with the main cities of Shaanxi province, which are clustered in the Guanzhong Area of central Shaanxi.

¹⁹ Shanxi Television Channel and CCTV were probably preferred because the signals were much more stable than those of other channels. The image quality was generally poor though, and even images on Shanxi Television would periodically turn snowy. The bad quality may partly explain why the viewers were not obsessed with watching TV programs.

night broadcast by other major provincial and national channels). In the video stores in Zhenchuan, I found that the most popular genres were martial arts movies, TV series and pornographic movies. In a restaurant in Yulin, an ancient town and also the major city of northern Shaanxi, I was surprised to see the television in a restaurant broadcasting VCDs of non-local and possibly foreign scenes including flower-strewn meadows, magnificent waterfalls, and snow-capped mountains. Without any subtitles or voice-over, it was hard to know where these places were, but the abundance of flowers and water appeared very “exotic” compared to dry, sandy, and windy Northern Shaanxi and attracted the attention of most of those in the restaurant.

I had assumed that for Chinese villagers with limited mobility and personal contact with non-local people, mass media such as television would be the critical means of imagining the nation and the world, and hence of producing identity as national or cosmopolitan subjects. However, my research experience in Heilongtan demonstrated that the real situation was more complex. While television remains important to rural residents in imagining a community broader than their immediate daily contacts, the process of mediation through television for rural audiences seems very different from that for urban audiences, with the latter being far more likely to enjoy opportunities to participate in the type of events they view on TV. Ningning, a 22-year-old girl from a town in Northern Shaanxi who was working in Xi'an as a waitress in 2001, recounted her earliest contacts with television:

“When I was only 6 or 7 years old [in the mid 1980s], a neighbor bought the first television in our town. The television was a magnet for me. I am not sure why. Every night, I just wanted to go to their house to watch television. I was so obsessed that I often went there in the late afternoon, skipped my dinner in order to

stay and watch the television, and then walked home alone in complete darkness in the late evening – which my parents could not understand because I had always been afraid of the dark. I don't even remember what I watched back then, I just remember that everything was new and interesting.”

Ningning left her family in Shaanbei for Xi'an in her late teens with several other girls of a similar age. After taking an arduous several-day bus trip to reach Xi'an she was introduced to work there by an “uncle” from her home town. She asserted that she was very happy on leaving home. She said she had determined very early that no matter how difficult life away from home might be, she would leave home at the earliest opportunity.

Qing, another young female informant from Shaanbai, told a similar story of being fascinated by television as a child. Qing was from Wubao in the Yulin Area. Her first contact with television came in around 1991 when she was ten years old. In those days she would watch television together with relatives and neighbors in the courtyard of the house of her aunt (*sima*, literally her fourth aunt). Her family only bought a television of their own in 1998, a year after the village had installed its own satellite dish, and when she was 18 years old. The dish was set on top of a mountain and managed by the family living closest to it (i.e. the family living furthest up the mountain). Qing said that after her first contact with television she became so obsessed that she desperately tried to stay near the television all the time, and was constantly afraid of missing interesting programs.²⁰ Qing also left her Shaanbei home to work as a waitress in Xi'an in her late teens.

Their stories reminded me of my last day of fieldwork in Shaanbei. Having completed my Heilongtan visit, I left the rest of the Japanese tree-planting group and the other Beijing scholars and stayed in a hotel in Yulin alone. After a nap, I woke up in the dark and quiet hotel room and turned on the television. Not surprisingly, the hotel

²⁰ Re: Interviews conducted by the author from April 6-12, 2001.

subscribed to many more channels than regular local families, including Beijing Cable Television and a few Hong Kong and foreign satellite channels such as Phoenix TV, ESPN, Channel V, and MTV Asia.²¹ Given my interest in mass media consumption in China, I was familiar with all these channels, the programs offered, and even many of the TV personalities, signers, and program hosts. However, after a week spent at the temple, where almost all “human contact” occurred face-to-face (i.e., without mediation), I suddenly felt both bewildered and enthralled by the familiar images and sounds shown on the small screen, the only source of illumination in otherwise dark room. The world represented in TV, which had previously seemed mundane – i.e., urban scenes, English speaking people, technological devices, Taiwanese and Hong Kong stars, etc. – suddenly seemed, albeit briefly, totally exotic. Sitting in the room alone after a week of intensive interaction with the villagers of Heilongtan, I pondered the relationship between myself and the familiar faces on screen. The familiar faces were merely strangers “out there.” Briefly, I felt that mass mediated materials was not sufficient to serve as building blocks of my identity and community. Were my feelings similar to the first contact of Ningning and Xiaoqing with television? Was my experience similar to that of the people of Heilongtan, Zhenchuan and Yulin? Restated, for residents of Heilongtan, the effects of mass media were more about providing a window to see places, things, and people “out there” or “far away” than about mediating their identity provided they remained living in rural Northern Shaanxi.

While the villagers of Heilongtan were undoubtedly aware that Beijing was the national capital, Beijing was also simply one among many urban places “out there,”

²¹ Hotels legally qualified to host foreigners are among the few institutions with state permission to broadcast foreign TV programs.

places that resembled neither their village nor the surrounding Northern Shaanxi area. They were both ignorant of and un-interested in the differences among Beijing, Shanghai, Xi'an, Taipei or New York. While the difference between Beijing and Heilongtan in terms of urbanization was clear to them, the nuances involved in reproducing Beijing as a global, international or modern city did not concern them.

I am not arguing that television was not a means for this group to imagine the nation-state, and nor am I suggesting that television did not help them to imagine themselves as part of the Chinese national community. Rather, while television was important to them in learning about the nation-state, the “state effects” was also felt through other non-mass-media institutions, such as their exchanges with Beijing scholars and hence national and international NGO groups, and also state policies on folk religion and beliefs conveyed through local cadres.

From the Hutong: Imagining a Global City

Another group who were also unfamiliar with and secluded from the privileged economic and political centers of Beijing were the Old Beijingers who lived *physically* in the center of the city and yet were marginalized. Old Beijingers were not isolated from the modern and internationalized Beijing by physical distance, as were the people of Heilongtan and Xi'an, but rather by the material gap between themselves and the political and economic ruling class. Witnessing the conspicuous physical and material transformation of the capital city and the newly emerging elite, Old Beijingers felt an inescapable sense of being left behind economically and socially, and thus desired to achieve an identity as modern subjects of the city. However, simultaneously, they were also viewed by

themselves and the others as “authentic Beijingers.” Their courtyard houses and neighborhoods, favorite foods, language, beliefs, and life style provided living evidence of some of the historical legacy of Beijing, which, as demonstrated in the official Olympics introduction of Beijing quoted previously, were as important as modernization to “the New Beijing”. On the one hand, as “native” residents, they constitute the identity of the capital city. On the other hand, being economically and socially alienated from the marked transformations of the city makes them estranged from both the material and the discursive contexts of what the state and ruling class expect the city to become.

During my routine visits to Shifang’s family, I sometimes brought them free copies of old magazines from the publisher where I conducted research with media professionals. Specifically, I often brought back copies of a magazine on lifestyle and interior design and another on health & fashion. My intention was merely to offer them some leisure reading. However, I noticed that they quickly skimmed through these magazines, displaying little interest in their content. One issue contained an article introducing Loft, a trendy bar & restaurant in Sanlitun, Beijing’s famous bar street. I was first introduced to Loft by a group of Hong Kong website developers working in Beijing and later frequented the bar with my business professional informants.²² Shifang Looked lost when I mentioned to her interesting features of the place. Noticing her silence I attempted to expand the topic to cover Sanlitun Bar Street and Xiushui Market – two of the most popular sites for business professionals, alien residents, and international

²² Loft was owned and managed by a Beijinger who grew up in an elite political family prominent in the General Political Department (*Zongzheng*) of the PLA, and was designed by his sister, a famous installation artist in Beijing and had previously lived and worked in New York. In fact, Loft was typically introduced as “the SOHO, New York urban style”. According to the owner, even growing up during the years of Cultural Revolution, they had a very happy childhood, with their father regularly allowing them to skip school to read his diverse collection of literary and artistic books, all of which were mostly banned at the time.

tourists in Beijing. Finally, she smiled bashfully, a contrast to her usual blunt and unreserved style, and said: “I have not been there yet but I believe I saw reports about these places on TV.” I felt embarrassed by my ignorance at how “distant” the realm Shifang inhabited was from that inhabited by Beijing’s business professionals. Sanlitun Bar Street and Xiushui Market, about 45 minutes away by subway and bus from Shifang’s neighborhood, were a Beijing completely foreign to her. This was one of the moments when I clearly recognized that Shifang’s Beijing was very different from that of the young urban professionals that had come to dominate the city.

Every evening, Shifang’s family spent time watching television, especially the News Reports (*Xinwen Lianbo*) at 7 pm and the prime-time TV series that started from 7:30 pm. Undoubtedly, news about Beijing, including urban redevelopment, markets, activities of national leaders, new city policies, tourism, etc., and consequently images and official discourse about the city were a common feature of TV news. Portrayals of Beijing could often contradict the daily experiences of Shifang and her family. For example, Tian’anmen Square and Zhongnan Hai (the State Leaders’ Compound in Beijing), which lay within a short bike ride of their home, were simultaneously a familiar part of the neighborhood and the center of key national and international events. Moreover, The Great Hall of the People was simultaneously an awesome architectural symbol of the nation-state, and where one of their relatives worked as a cook, a personal connection that provided them with a source of good quality *mantou* (Chinese steamed bread). Besides political news, economic and market news also often seemed unreal to them. In recent years, due to relatively consumer-friendly tax and vehicle licensing policies, Beijing had come to control the biggest share – about 10% – of the Chinese car

market. Unsurprisingly, the burgeoning car market is frequently reported as a key index of the modernization of Beijing. Additionally, following the disbanding of the work-unit residence distribution system (*fuli fenfang*) in 2000, the “commercial housing market” (*shangpinfang shichang*) in urban China was also rapidly growing. Several unique characteristics of the capital, including the large population of alien residents and the coming 2008 Olympics, boosted the local real estate (housing) market and associated development. However, for Shifang’s family, subsisting as they were on a relatively low income, news about the development of consumer markets, and particularly about expensive commodities such as cars and houses, seems completely irrelevant, if not bothersome.

In addition to news reports, prime-time TV series, particularly the genres of urban romances and police stories, were also usually focused on major metropolitan centers such as Beijing. Through these melodramas, Shifang and her group observed the stereotypical lifestyles of the urban rich. In 2000, the most popular TV series was *Yuwang* (Desire). The scriptwriter of *Yuwang*, Li Xiaoming, was also the scriptwriter of *Kewang* (Yearning), the so called “turning point in Chinese TV series” that had been released in 1990.²³ *Yuwang* tells a story about how, after two decades of economic reform, the newly rich enjoy life, manipulate one another, and experience complex interpersonal relationships. In a way, *Yuwang* resembles U.S. prime-time soap operas such as *Dynasty* (1981-1989) and *Dallas* (1978-1988), demonstrating the indulgence of the wealthy and extravagant. Another successful prime-time TV series in 2000 was *Yongbumingmu* (Restless Death [translation mine]), a story about the love and hate

²³ For discussion on *Kewang*, see: *Yearnings: televisual love and melodramatic politics in contemporary China* (Rofel 1994).

relationships tying together a policewoman, a young male undercover agent, and the daughter of a drug baron. This drama highlighted excessive materialism.

Once when watching *Dongfangzhizi* (the Children of the Orient), a popular news program on CCTV telling stories of Chinese self-made entrepreneurs, Shifang could not help but distressfully comment: “How can the differences between people be so huge (*nishuo, ren he ren zenneng cha zheme duo ne*)?” Despite suffering daily financial pressure, Shifang usually remained resigned. On the day she voiced her distress about the differences between their material conditions and that of the rich, Shifang’s family had just learned from Beijing Youth Daily about the Liulichang Cultural Industrial Park (Liulichang Wenhua Chanye Yuanqu) project, an urban redevelopment and historic preservation project with potential to dramatically change their life (Anonymous 2000). This project aimed to transform the old antique quarter of Liulichang into the biggest and most important antique, culture and history park in China, by preserving existing traditional architecture, building new courtyard houses, maintaining old hutongs, and widening main streets. As part of the project, many residents would be forced to move to new suburban communities, where they would be assigned newly built apartment as compensation for the loss of their properties. Given that their courtyard house was literally falling apart Shifang’s family had long wished to live in a *loufang* (high rise building) apartment with modern fittings such as central heating and a private bathroom. However, since the courtyard house had been bought by the great grandfather of Qingyuan, Qingyuan was only one of seven cousins sharing joint ownership of the property. Consequently, if Shifang’s family were forced to move for the redevelopment project, they would very likely face tough negotiations with other family members and

might end up with nowhere to live at all, given that they were in no financial position to buy their own apartment.

The startling transformation and newly emerged extravagant lifestyle that characterized Beijing's streetscapes, particularly the Central Business District in Eastern Beijing and the Olympic Park and Villages in Northern Beijing, seemed alien to Shifang's family, a lower-middle class working family living in a dilapidated hutong neighborhood. Alongside this feeling of alienation though, the modernization and internationalization of Beijing also overwhelmed hutong residents in very specific ways, for example the project of Liulichang Cultural Park. This project threatened to further marginalize their social and physical positions in the city. The lower-middle class hutong families differ from residents of Heilongtan in that they are familiar with the desire expressed in state discourse to see Beijing becoming a modern world city. Though Shifang and her like may not be familiar with the language and concepts of global cities and globalization, through both mass mediation and tangible changes in quotidian life, they sense the existence of a Beijing "out there", which is modern, materially abundant, internationalized, and, above all, different from their lives that need to be preserved for the interests of this new Beijing. Being aware of Beijing's transformation and sharing the perspective of the state on this change, Old Beijingers constantly suffer an acute need to negotiate new subjectivities related to being appropriate citizens of the New Beijing.

Mass Media in Creating National Image

While images of Beijing held by those elsewhere, as shown in the previous section, could emphasize diverse aspects (a capital city, an urban place, or an international community, etc.), images of the capital city always represent the nation. Inspired by studies on the state-society relationship, I am curious to learn more about how the state is experienced, namely how Mitchell's concept of "state effect" is created, especially in places socially or geographically remote from the state center. Various studies have examined how the state of China has been reproduced through the creations of social institutions and the reproduction of subjectivities such as gender in rural areas (re: Hershatter 2002). To answer this question, and partly inspired by Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined community" (1983) and partly by anthropological studies on national imagination and mass media (Abu-Lughod 1993; Mankekar 1999; Rofel 1994), this study focuses on how the consumption of mass media, particularly television and video, influences the imagination of the nation-state, and thus the capital. Mass media deserves special attention in relation to contemporary national image creation in China since, from the outset, the ruling Chinese Communist Party has stressed the importance of mass media for producing national ideologies.

The "Throat and Tongue" of the Communist Party

From the outset, mass media were a key instrument that the communist state used to consolidate its power (Farquhar 1996; Huang and Yu 1997; Lynch 1999; Stranahan 1990). As early as the 1920s, Mao Zedong posited that art and literature, in both their form and content, had to be useful and of service to the masses. Mao declared that mass communication should be used to mold the public into the "new Chinese man" (Chu 1977;

McDougall 1980). The four tasks of the mass media were to propagandize Party policies, and to educate, organize and mobilize the masses (Hong 1998, 43). Drawing from the revolutionary philosophy of Lenin, mass media in China is defined as *Dangdehoushe*, literally the throat and tongue of the party, and meaning the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party, responsible for promulgating philosophies and values that the party considers important to the socialist revolution and construction. Consequently, the Party-state controlled Chinese mass media possess four characteristics: state-owned, highly centralized and hierarchical, tightly controlled, and self-censored (Hong 1998).

Despite the unprecedented changes (including marketization and consumerization) that mass media in China have experienced since the 1980s, they remain Marxist in nature. While the transnational information industry began to supplant nation-states in controlling media power on a transnational scale during the 1980s (re: Schiller 1989), in China the state retains strong media control. The Statutes for Radio and Television Administration announced in 1997 confirm that Chinese radio and television media must serve the people and socialism, and prohibit foreign investment in or management of radio and television, including Sino-foreign corporations. Besides ideological concerns, the profitability of the media industry also influences China's policies regarding media control.²⁴ The uniqueness of the Chinese media system lies not only in how it serves national interests, a commonly identified characteristic of mass media in "Third World" or "developing" countries. Instead, the uniqueness of the Chinese mass media lies in its

²⁴ In October 2001, the Economist reported that AOL Time Warner had become the first Western media company to become licensed to broadcast directly to ordinary Chinese people (Anonymous 2001). While this deal only involved collaboration in media content, the Chinese government is expected to gradually loosen its control over mass media. After entering the WTO in 2001, China is expected to allow foreign investors to establish, own, and manage movie theaters in China, and to own up to 49% of video and music distribution companies (<http://www.yindw.com.cn/wintonews/200112/1225/news12380196.html>).

firmly held philosophy of serving the Communist Party, as well as in the exclusive state-ownership of mass media and the close state control over media institutions exercised via all levels of government.

Regarding the Chinese media market of 2000, the variety of programs probably equals that in the west. Foreign and transnational programs are readily and widely accessible. However, these programs remain subject to tight state censorship. For example, a variety show produced by an independent production company working in partnership with Beijing Cable Television had to submit their program for approval to the municipal division of the Propaganda Ministry every week before it could be broadcast. Moreover, besides institutional controls, the most powerful mechanism for maintaining the Marxist nature of the Chinese mass media is self-censorship by media professionals. In an in-depth interview, a Taiwanese program director of a popular variety show of Beijing Cable Television complained that the team tended to enforce strict self-censorship and edited out whatever contents they considered inappropriate even before submitting the programs to the censors.

Since the beginning of the Reform Era, the mass media, as the mouthpiece of the Party, has been bound to promote the philosophy of economic reform by educating the masses about market economy and modernity. To maximize the effectiveness of the mass media, the government has made sure to provide nationwide radio and television services. Besides establishing television stations and producing programs, the state recognizes the need to develop more powerful communication technologies, in order to create a national audience community within its large and geographically diverse territory (Schein 2001). Consequently, the state strongly supports the development of cable and satellite services.

In 2001, 88 million households in China were cable television consumers. Cable television services have multiplied the channels and programs available to television audiences. The most meaningful transformation that cable television has brought for Chinese audiences is easy access not only to local and national channels but also to channels from other provinces and even from overseas. In other words, cable television services help mediate previously separate, and sometimes geographically isolated, communities. Zhu Yun, the retired professor who had relocated from Kunming to Xi'an in the 1950s, commented: "the greatest benefit of cable TV is to provide us with news of our hometowns (*jiexiang de xinwen*).” Of course the hometown he was referring to was Kunming, not Xi'an. For urban audiences, shared media content provides a shared "imagined community (Anderson 1983)" and enables shared identities. Meanwhile, for most rural audiences, television and cable television services offer a means of instantly learning about events outside their villages and in big cities, something that was previously impossible. The government recognizes that efficient communication through television of concepts of market economy is crucial for the economic development of the vast and poor rural areas, and hence for the overall economic development of China.

To ensure that the entire population, particularly those from remote and poor rural villages and mountain areas can be included within the reach of the national media, in 1998 The State launched the *Cun Cun Tong Guangbo Dianshi Gongcheng* project (Engineering Project of Radio and Television for Every Village), which involved a guarantee to provide radio and television services to every Chinese village by 2000. This project is one of a series of *Cun Cun Tong* (Every Village) engineering projects – other similar project involve electricity, roads, public transportation, and so on – designed to

improve the infrastructure of remote and poorer areas. In many remote areas, the first step in implementing the Cun Cun Tong Guangbo Dianshi project was to provide electricity supply. Satellite transmission was adopted rather than cable in most remote and mountain villages because the latter was either too cumbersome or too expensive. Specifically, to establish satellite services, the government needs to set up Satellite TV Receiving Stations (*Weixing Guangbo Dianshi Shouzhuan Zhan*) in villages, staff these stations to ensure maintenance of their equipment, including satellite dishes, receiver boxes, and cables, and provide financial support to cover ongoing expenditure. From 1998 to 2000, the government invested roughly RMB 1.62 billion (about USD 0.2 billion) in the project, providing radio and television for more than 100,000 villages nationwide.²⁵ In Guizhou province alone, more than three thousand Satellite TV Receiving Stations were established from 1998 to 2000.²⁶ When traveling in rural areas the huge white satellite dishes (*guo* or *tianguo*, literally “pot” and “sky pot” respectively) are frequently visible on mountainsides. For villagers, the conspicuous satellite dishes are a symbol of progress (*jindu*) less through being a product of advanced technology than through being the embodiment of the state policy of “Cun Cun Tong” and of the state discourse of progress and modernity.

The state stresses the importance of the Cun Cun Tong Guangbo Dianshi project because “radio and television help make the voices of the party and state heard in thousands of households (*rang dang he guojia de shengyin chuanru qianjiawanhu*).” The project of providing satellite TV services for hundreds of thousands of remote mountain villages represents a modern implementation of the communist philosophy that mass

²⁵ Re: <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/3586/20010401/430408.html>

²⁶ Re: <http://www.gog.com.cn/gzsb/s0204/ca141827.htm>

media should serve as the mouthpiece of the party. The Cun Cun Tong project is seen as helping promote state policies and consolidating national unity, enhancing the “quality” (*suzhi*) of the Chinese rural population through cultural and scientific education, expanding the domestic market by encouraging consumption among the rural population, and developing the rural economy. A rhyme reportedly made-up by villagers vividly expresses this last point: “*Guangbo jincun, wadio qionggen; dianshi jinhu, facai zhifu* (Radio in the village, removing poverty; television in the household, making everyone rich).”²⁷ Additionally, the availability of radio and television services in the previously “illiterate villages (*mang cun*)” provides villagers with another means to build an image of the nation.

Imagining the Nation and the Capital through Mass Media

Pan Yuzhen is an ethnic handicrafts dealer based in Beijing, and a member of the Miao minority from Guizhou province. Since the early 1980s, she has spent a great deal of time traveling between the capital and minority villages to collect handicrafts. Her small room in Beijing is decorated with wall posters of the Ten Commanders-in-Chief (*Shidayuanshuai*) of the CPC. Her personal library of books and magazines were either about minority embroidery or CPC military and political leaders. Additionally, she expressed a wish for a Video CD player so that she could watch videos of CPC leaders. When Pan Yuzhen talked about her interest watching videos of Chinese national leaders she smiled bashfully at intervals, as though from some uncontainable excitement. I posit that these new visual media – television and VCDs – represented to Pan Yuzhen in a new and lively manner the national stories and heroes that she had been familiar with since

²⁷ Re: <http://www.gog.com.cn/gzsb/s0204/ca141827.htm>.

she was young, probably mainly through loudspeaker broadcasts and the words of local cadres. The vivid images thus provided her a new sense of intimacy with the nation-state with which she was already somewhat familiar. Modern audiovisual media did not change the manner in which the mass media served the nation-state, but did more efficiently and effectively convey its perspectives. Audiovisual mass media reduce the mental gap between the geographical periphery and the central state. However, such media simultaneously emphasize social, cultural and economic differences (such as gender, ethnicity and class).

Pan Yuzhen's worship of national leaders and heroes through mass media consumption demonstrates her positioning in the nation and in the city. In Beijing, she lived in a temporary "village" comprising rows of identical one level brick "houses", inhabited by migrant laborers.²⁸ Each "house" comprised a simple square room, in most cases with the windows being protected by iron bars. These rooms lacked running water, and the residents depended on public toilets. The village was served only by clay roads, which rain quickly turned into a mass of mud and puddles. On weekends when the Antique Market where she worked was open, Pan Yuzhen commuted on foot to the nearby market. She would occasionally hire a rickshaw driver when she needed to transport heavy goods, in which case she would always bargain hard for the fare. Most of her meals simply comprised a large bowl of steamed rice accompanied by a tiny dish of spicy pickled vegetables brought from her village in Guizhou and stored in large pottery jars in her room. Like most migrant laborers, Pan Yuzhen spent little on her living costs in Beijing, despite making a decent living from her business.

²⁸ The village was built on a temporarily vacant space and was demolished in spring of 2001 for new construction project. After the village was demolished Pan Yuzhen moved to an apartment shared with other migrants from Guizhou in a nearby neighborhood.

Consequently, despite having lived in Beijing for some years and being a seasoned minority art work collector for numerous official museums and institutes, as an older minority woman without legal Beijing household register (hukou) and working mainly as a dealer in Beijing's Antique Flea Market, Pan Yuzhen was considered a migrant laborer in Beijing and was certainly not a "Beijinger" or a member of any privileged social group. Hence, the best way for her to approach the center of the imagined national community was through mass media. Living in Beijing for years did not make her part of the urban community or a member of the capital city. I posit that mass media are used to construct national imagination in two ways. In consuming mass media, people not only imagine the nation and delineate the capital city, but also produce their identity and that of their hometowns. The making of Beijing – through mass media – is also a process of reproducing the rest of the nation.

Urban-Rural Differences in Beijing and China

This section first discusses the definition and differentiation between the urban and rural in China. Then it focuses on the impacts of mass media on the creation of a hierarchical urban system. The concepts of "strategic place" are used to discuss how Beijing, hutong neighborhoods, Xi'an, and Heilongtan represent the evolution of a new hierarchical system in China.

China's Urban-rural Division

This chapter examines how Beijing is imagined by those elsewhere and argues that these images of Beijing from elsewhere, and by extension the manner in which these other places are imagined, are creating a new geography of China. Since this study addresses changing urban-rural hierarchy and differentiation, it seems necessary to discuss the definitions of urban, rural and the differentiation between them. This discussion will clarify that urban-rural divisions are not absolute, either in this dissertation or in China. The distinction is often simply one of scale of urbanization. The present study of the transformation of China examines the urban-rural dichotomy because the urban and rural were critical categories created in the 1950s and firmly maintained until the start of the Reform time. The state-policy and institutions buttressing the urban-rural division strongly affected social structure and identity during the Maoist time and has continued to influence lives, desires and goals in the post-Mao era.

In Chinese, *cheng* (a walled city), *chengshi*, and *dushi* are common words for cities. *Zhen* is the term for towns or smaller cities. *Xiang* is the word for the countryside, and *cun* is the word for villages. *Chengzhen* (city-town) is often used to refer in general terms to urban places and qualities, while *xiangcun* (countryside-village) refers to rural places and qualities, and *chengxiang* is the proper term describing the urban-rural dyad. Nevertheless, I argue that the term *chengxiang* connotes something different from urban-rural. In the English context, urban-rural connotes a clear contrast and division between two different, contradictory and mutually exclusive conditions and concepts. However, in the Chinese context, besides indicating two different elements or conditions, *chengxiang* connotes an inclusive relation between these two elements - i.e., *chengxiang* indicates “city *and* countryside” rather than urban *versus* rural and is used to highlight the

diverse and complementary landscapes, lifestyles and economies that make up a system (the nation-state, for example). The difference between *chengxiang* and urban-rural closely reflects the embedding, rather than exclusive, relations between cities and the countryside in historical China.

In imperial China, cities were initially centers of administration, gradually also becoming centers of commerce. Even in the late imperial period, most urban dwellers maintained a connection with their birth-places and often returned home after retirement or between stays in the city. John Friedmann (2005) notes that over half of the urban population in late imperial times were temporary migrants and argues that imperial cities were centers of career development and places where people sought fortune, not sources of identity. Despite hosting some residents for many years, cities resembled “offices” or “work places,” and residents maintained psychological and material connections with their countryside homes. In other words, many Chinese urban dwellers continued to live in rural contexts. Sinologist and historian Frederic Mote (1977) uses a continuum to describe Chinese urban-rural relations in the imperial period. He argues that the differentiation between urban and rural culture long remained almost meaningless in China, with both urban and rural life maintaining uniformly rural characteristics. Cities and urban culture became distinctive and prominent only when the Chinese population increased during the Ming and Qing dynasties, namely during the late imperial period. The population increase on the one hand led to the expansion of existing villages and the growth of new towns, and on the other hand to the loss of agricultural land. Both effects significantly increased the urban population. The growth of the urban population accelerated following the end of the imperial period. Elvin noted that “by the beginning

of the twentieth century, only about 6 percent of the country's population lived in urban agglomerations of fifty thousand or more population" ((Elvin and Skinner 1974, 3) cited in (Friedmann 2005, 8)), yet research by the National Bureau of Statistics of China has indicated that in 2007 some 44.9% of the national population lived in urban areas.²⁹ I suspect that the rapid increase in population resulted not just from the emergence of new urban agglomerations but also from a general trend of urbanization, though with differentiated speed and scale. My point is that in imperial China, urban life was an extension of rural life, and the urban and rural division was blurred by a generally high population density. Simply put, urban and rural division in China has not been absolute.

What make the urban-rural divide in China really interesting are the state social, political and economic arrangements that created a clear division between urban and rural China from the 1950s through the establishment and enforcement of *hukou*, the household registration, system. The Household Registration System was established in 1958 as part of the communist state's planned economy package, and was greatly affected by the shortage of resources existing at the time. The Household Registration System was based not on differentiating urban and rural places, but on dividing the population into urban residents and rural peasants. The urban residents were designated as workers of the communist state; they worked in state owned factories, lived in work-unit communities, depended on state rations for food and other daily necessities, and received healthcare and education via state arrangements. Meanwhile, the rural residents were designated as peasants of the communist state. They were responsible for producing food for the nation-state (and all the agriculture produce had to be collected by local officials and then redistributed to individual households). Although peasants often

²⁹ Re: http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjgb/ndtjgb/qgndtjgb/t20080228_402464933.htm.

lived in their own houses and worked on the land their family had been farming for generations, both the land and whatever agricultural produce they raised or grew belonged to the state. As resources such as healthcare and education were unevenly distributed between cities and countryside, the rural peasants received disproportionately few benefits from the planned economy. The links between the distribution of resources – via job assignment, housing, education opportunity, healthcare, and so on – and the Household Registration System were what buttressed the system into a powerful mechanism that defined and divided the population (re: Li Jingguo 2002, 8).

The Household Registration System affects the urban-rural divide in three ways. First, it defines agricultural (*nongye*) and non-agricultural (*fei nongye*) populations, thus creating rural and urban subjects. Second, the system historically prohibited the free movement of people, though recently these controls have been loosened. Third, the linking of social benefits such as housing, healthcare, education and job assignment to the Household Registration System create additional barriers to free physical movement. The two groups created by the Household Registration System originally corresponded to occupational differences. However, the mobility and other restrictions created by the system saw the occupational difference transform into a more general hierarchical difference between urban and rural. The firmly established urban-rural divide comprises the social and structural background based on which the changes since the Reform Era have been occurring. This division has left a social and cultural legacy that includes stereotypes regarding peasants, rural China and migrant laborers and thus complicates the current transition.

The Household Registration System and the urban-rural division it created were part of the CCP's planned economy. As the planned economy was replaced by the market economy in the Reform Era, the differentiation of city (non-agricultural) versus agricultural households and the associated urban-rural division was also challenged. The division was undermined by two changes related to the urbanization of the population: first, sizeable domestic migration towards the cities and, second, a wider process of urbanization that included the urbanization of villages. In the early 2000s, China saw more than 100 million rural people become urban migrants; in other words, roughly one tenth of the population was neither rural nor urban, instead being migrants. The rapid emergence of this "third" identity challenged the existing dichotomy of urban versus rural, and led to the revision of the policies surrounding the Household Registration System (specifically the loosening up of the criteria for obtaining an urban household register). Moreover, since almost all new labor immigrants in Chinese cities were domestic migrants from poorer regions, the issue of labor migration in China simultaneously subverted the existing urban-rural dichotomy among *people* and highlighted uneven development and hierarchical structures among *places*.

In terms of the urbanization of villages and the countryside, from the beginning of the Reform Era, many rural villages and towns – mostly in the southeastern coastal provinces –underwent industrialization and corporatization (*qiyehua*). The establishment of Township and Village Enterprises (*Xiangzhen Qiye*, TVEs), which often succeeded through flexible adaptation of the existing communist system (i.e., local cadres and communist administrative organizations), brought crucial wealth and development to these towns and villages (re: Friedmann 2005). Besides locally-initiated urbanization

through industrialization and corporatization, the state also endeavors to urbanize rural regions by building transportation and communication infrastructure (i.e., roads, satellite stations, etc.) and encouraging a market mindset – encouraging peasants to participate in competitive markets by starting private business, working for factories or developing local tourism. As a result of rapid urbanization driven by economic development, Dengist China witnessed a fading of urban and rural divisions and the emergence of interurban competition and hierarchies, and thus a more complex and fluid definition of both urban and rural China.

Discussing the meaning of the urban and the rural, the city and the countryside in the Chinese language and historical context, and reviewing the establishment and weakening of the urban-rural divide resulting from the policy and practice of the communist regime, I wish to emphasize that while there are traditionally no absolute divisions between urban and rural China the firm differentiation between city and countryside households and regions created during the Maoist period established the background for many of the social transformations of recent decades. The other goal of discussing the undermining of the Household Registration System since the Reform Era is to demonstrate that when the established nationwide urban-rural dichotomy was challenged by the large-scale migration of the rural population to the cities as migrant laborers, increasingly fluid urban-rural relationships inevitably intersected with emerging social differentiation within cities. The next Chapter will further address how migrant laborers in the city were crucial to Beijingers in imagining rural China and thus produced Beijing's urbanity and Beijingers' urban identity. Mediated by migrant laborers,

Beijingers transformed urban class differentiations into an urban and rural regional division.

Mass Media and Emerging Urban-rural Differentiation

Considering television as a national medium, watching television offers – as demonstrated in television consumption by people in Xi'an, Heilongtan, and Beijing's hutong – a point where the local meets the national, the rural meets the urban, and the disadvantaged meet the elite. Even though intellectuals in Xi'an, villagers of Heilongtan, and working class families in Beijing's hutong have different television watching preferences, in all three cases, the audience encounters what they lack and what they are not. Watching television thus provides a sphere for molding identities – particularly a sense of hierarchy between the audience and their observed others – whether the capital, the national urban centers, or the rich.

Lila Abu-Lughod (1993), in her study of Egyptian television, argued that “[I]nsofar as popular programs deal with national social and political issues, as I have argued about Egyptian serials, they cannot be analyzed at the general level of cultural difference but must be treated as historically specific (509).” Similarly, I posit that how Chinese of a particular place (Xi'an, hutong, Heilongtan, etc.) appropriate the television programs they consume, and hence what kind of identity is created through television watching, must be analyzed and situated in the current political and economic context of China. The Reform Era is a time of a collective search for wealth, and witnesses growing differences between the urban and the rural, and between the educated professionals and the laborers and peasants who are being economically left behind. Consequently, among

the various discrepancies that exist between the audience and the characters they encounter on television, I argue that the most obvious differentiations in identity are class distinctions at the city level, and urban-rural differences at the national level.

Besides the national political and economic transformations that lead to the concentration of wealth in cities, the dominant pattern of mass media production also contributes to the manufacture of urban-rural distinctions and corresponding identities. Similar to Egyptian television as described by Abu-Lughod, Chinese television is also produced mainly by an urban elite in a small number of cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Changsha (the capital of Hunan Province). One result of the urban production of mass media is that the rural audience often differs from the imagined audience of the culture producers.

Guangxian Chuanmei (Enlight Media or Enlight TV Production), based in Beijing and founded in 1998 by former financial journalist and Beijing Television (BTV) program producer Wang Changtian, is one of the earliest private mass media and entertainment production companies in China. By 2000, its programs were broadcast by about 150 television stations nationwide, and its production house was selected along with Hong Kong based Phoenix TV and the Hunan (Provincial) Television and Broadcasting Group as the best mass media producer in China;³⁰ moreover, its entertainment program, *Zhongguo Yule Baodao* (Chinese Entertainment News), was recognized as the most popular entertainment program nationally.³¹ By 2003, Guangxian Chuanmei had clearly become the leading entertainment television production company

³⁰ According to the survey conducted by *Xin Zhoukan*.

³¹ According to the 2000 *Zhongguo Dianshi Jiemu Bang* (Chinese Television Program Billboard), a nationwide audience opinion poll.

in China. Its programs were broadcasted to a domestic audience of over one billion daily, throughout roughly 300 television stations covering all regions of Mainland China.

The huge success of Guangxian Chuanmei deserves further analysis. The programs it produced most strongly reflected the tastes of an urban and elite audience. For example, its entertainment programs closely resembled those produced by E! Entertainment Television and the MTV Asia Channel: entertainment news and celebrity gossip featuring Chinese stars throughout the “Greater China Region” (Mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia) and presented in a fast-paced and modern style, including fancy graphics, information scrolling across the screen, rapid-fire narration (often including English), pop music, and exaggerated acting. In fact, Li Delai, the vice-president of Guangxian Chuanmei acknowledged that the company aims to become the E! Network of China and regularly reviews E! Entertainment Television and other foreign television networks (including CNN, MTV, and TVBS of Taiwan) for inspiration.³² The logo of the production house is also in English and resembles that of E! Networks. While the urban elite are the imagined audience for Guangxian Chuanmei, many of their actual audience of over 1 billion are on the margins of the dominant urban culture, either living outside the metropolitan areas or urban residents from the lower parts of the social hierarchy. How would this unimagined audience interpret these programs? Are their views reflected in the “most popular television program” survey? Do they prefer the programs of Guanxian to others?³³ Li Delai, when discussing the future of Chinese television, emphasized that one of the tasks of Guangxian Chuanmei was to

³² According to interview with Li Delai on June 4, 2001 conducted by the author.

³³ When I started to pay attention to Guangxian during my fieldwork between 2000-2001, I did not notice my informants outside Beijing watching these programs. However, back then, Guangxian was only just starting to expand its coverage beyond the few big cities. More research is required to answer these questions.

“cultivate consumers (*peiyang xiaofeizhe*)” and to “produce a television audience (*zhizao dianshi guanzhong*).” His aspiration indicates that the goal of the most successful Chinese television producers was not to make programs for existing audiences but to produce their audience – molding their tastes, values and habits.³⁴

Abu-Lughod (1993) argues that what are considered interesting and meaningful by urban media producers are likely to be interpreted differently by audiences in economic and geographically peripheral areas. For example, she observes that Egyptian villagers

“...on the margins of the dominant national culture did not perceive the contradictions between the new Islamic activism and the dramas of secular television because the people involved [i.e. both the Islamic activities and the characters on television] were equally associated with the nonlocal – with the major cities of Cairo and Alexandria or even the provincial cities and towns closer to home (1993, 509).”

Hence, for the Egyptian villagers, secular mass media value and Islamic activism are both aspects of a national urban identity (508). I also found a similar indifference to differences among diverse urban cultures in Heilongtan. For example, in Heilongtan the popular distinction between a political and cultural Beijing and a commercial Shanghai failed to strike a chord. The same indifference is also reflected in their interests in non-local scenes without the curiosity to know where the footages were shot. Events in Beijing, Shanghai, and New York were equally remote, being urban phenomena not associated with the local context.

Abu-Lughod (1993) strongly suggests that, when considering television as a national medium, anthropologists must examine regional variations and ask how people

³⁴ Interview with Li Delai on June 4, 2001 conducted by the author.

from a particular place appropriate what is broadcast to them. Examining and comparing the use of television among various places in China, I propose that the popularization and diversity of television programs is being accompanied by an evolving consciousness of the urban-rural difference. The distinction is evident in recent popular political debates on topics such as uneven distribution of wealth (*pinfu chaju*), urbanization (*chengzhenhua*), migrant laborers (*mingong*) and the population issue (*renkou wenti*), and the problems involving agriculture, peasants, and rural villages (*Sannongwenti*), all of which are relevant to the growing urban-rural divide. Mass media consumption is certainly not the only process through which the distinction was made, but is a dominant site of cultural contestation. Although the existence of urban-rural differences is not unique to the Reform Era, qualitative differences make the urban-rural difference that emerged since the 1990s worth careful examination. The urban-rural distinction prior to the 1970s was largely a dichotomous system institutionalized by the household registration system, which confined people to places and classified the population into urban workers and rural peasants. Now that the importance of the household registration system is declining and domestic migration has markedly increased, urban-rural differences have grown rather than disappearing and are evolving into an east-west and urban-rural hierarchy between places.

This consciousness of an emerging national hierarchical urban system is providing people from diverse places with new political and geographical references for imagining their community, the nation, and the world. In Beijing, when people learned that I had grown up in Taipei and studied in New York (actually New Jersey), they often asked me to compare Beijing with either Taipei or New York. They would ask me for my

general opinion about Beijing, whether Beijing was more *jinbu* (advanced) than Taipei, the degree of modernization (*xiandaihuade chengdu*) of Taipei, whether Beijing still lagged far behind New York, etc. The business elite of Beijing, particularly those who worked closely with foreign professionals, also tended to evaluate their accomplishments and position themselves with reference to the international talent pool. Jing Duan, a manager of the China headquarters of a leading international technology, media and financial services company, confessed that

“More than 10 years ago, when I left my home province and enrolled in one of the best colleges in Beijing, I naively thought that I was on the top of the world already. I did not realize how big the world was and who I was until I started working for foreign companies. ‘You and your country are still far behind,’ was the message I frequently received from my foreign co-workers. I knew I had a great deal to catch up on and I think I did it.”³⁵

This desire to draw comparisons between Beijing and other world cities and between Beijingers and other transnational professionals was shared by Beijingers of various backgrounds, with the exception of migrant laborers,³⁶ a phenomenon that appears to result from migrant laborers being excluded from the Beijing community and thus not identifying with it. It seems natural for Beijingers to compare the development of their city with major cities overseas rather than with other Chinese cities, and to imagine their city in a global context.

In contrast, for people in Xi'an, despite Xi'an being, like Beijing, a major Chinese city, comparing Xi'an with global cities such as New York seems inappropriate and

³⁵ Conversation with Jing Duan.

³⁶ During my 18-months of fieldwork I only experienced one migrant laborer who was curious about the difference between Beijing/China and foreign countries. Fang, a domestic worker (*ayi*), once asked me: “In the US, do people have to look for jobs by themselves? Does the government assign jobs and provide retirement benefits to all citizens?”

nonsensical. Instead, as I described above, Xi'aners tended to perceive Beijing as a more important other in relation to their city. The difference between Beijing and Xi'an lies in the fact that Beijing has actively joined global and regional economic networks and become an influential node within the global economy, while Xi'an has not. As the relations between Beijing and other regional and global cities strengthen, Beijing is becoming part of the global urban system, while Xi'an remains focused on regaining its lost status as a central part of the Chinese urban system.

Another example of the emergence of political and geographical references for use in imagining specific cities is witnessed in the self-positioning of residents of Macau versus Foshan, a major city in Guangdong province. In spring 2000, at the very beginning of my fieldwork, I made a surprising finding during a research trip to Foshan. Namely, I found that Macau residents referred to Cantonese (people from Guangdong), as either 'northerners' (*beifangren*) or 'people of the hinterland' (*neidiren*). Yet for most Chinese, Cantonese are definitely southerners, and moreover Guangdong is a coastal province and hence not a part of the interior hinterland. In Foshan, a Cantonese city about an hour away from Gongbei Customs (Gongbei *Kou'an*), the border between Macau and Mainland China, the meaning of hinterland was relative. Influenced by the loose media censorship in Guangdong and a common dialect (i.e. Cantonese), the most popular TV channels in Foshan were cable channels from Hong Kong.³⁷ When I asked if they also watched CCTV or news from the rest of Mainland China, informants in Foshan disinterestedly replied: "Yeah. Sometimes. But news from the *hinterland* (*neidi*) [emphasis mine] is usually boring." The word *neidi* (hinterland) implies a degree of

³⁷ The closeness to Hong Kong and the distance from Beijing is critical to the loose censorship of mass media and consequent availability of Hong Kong television channels in Guangdong province.

contempt towards the point of reference. The contrast between Macau and Foshan shows that, for Macau residents in the spring of 2000 (only a few months after Macao officially became a Special Administration Zone of China), Mainland China, even the prosperous and coastal Guangdong province, was certainly not a critical other in identity production, while for residents of Foshan, the important others in identity creation were Hong Kong and Macau rather than Beijing, and certainly not other cities in the Chinese “hinterland”.

Beijing as a Strategic Place

Analyzing the use of mass media by people occupying the peripheries, this chapter aims to adopt the perspective of Chinese elsewhere to address how Beijing as a capital city is imagined and how a new type of urban-rural hierarchy emerges from this process of imagination and negotiation. Addressing the transformation of Beijing and Beijingers in the context of reform China and economic globalization, I posit that it is more productive to adopt a dual focus – that is, to examine Beijing not only from the perspective of privileged Beijingers but also that of Chinese in more peripheral locations. To consider Beijing in the context of the wider global economic and political system, I use Saskia Sassen’s concept of strategic place to examine whether Beijing has successfully gained a strategic advantage in the global system. It is useful to examine domestic history and political geography, since an understanding of this can help clarify whether Beijing is emerging as a strategic place in the global system.

Strategic place is a theoretical concept used by Saskia Sassen (1994) to address the emergence of key sites to provide services related to economic globalization, including global cities, export processing zones, and offshore banking centers. Strategic

places are the locations of the key operations of the global economy, and of strategic organizers of the global economy, such as transnational corporations and global financial markets. Sassen explains that the complexity of international transactions in the era of the global economy requires “a highly advanced infrastructure of specialized services” and “top-level concentrations of telecommunication facilities (9),” both of which explain the centrality of cities in economic globalization. However, the changing global economy exerts various influences on cities and urban systems – some cities became centers of power and prosperity and serve global markets, while others decline and shrink from national centers to regional cities.

According to Sassen, a key feature of the current economic era is the “combination of geographic dispersal of economic activities and system integration (1994, 20).” To incorporate geographically dispersed economic operations, cities with advantages in specialized services for firms and telecommunication facilities thus assume command functions and play strategic roles in the current global economic system. Cities such as New York, London, and Tokyo became global cities because they fulfilled these demands for specialized services, telecommunication facilities and command functions, which are witnessed in, among other features, the concentration of the world’s largest banks and stock markets in these cities.

According to Sassen, global cities are the command centers of the global economy. Based on this definition, Beijing is not yet a global city – i.e. not a hub of the global economy. Nevertheless, *quanqiu hua* (globalization) and *quanqiu chengshi* (global city) or *shijie chengshi* (world city) are popular topics of discussion among mass media and intellectuals in Chinese mega-cities, including Beijing. For example, in the report

(presented in 2001) on “the Urban-rural Spatial Development Project of the Beijing-Tianjin-Northern Hebei Area (Jingjinjibei Chengxiang Kongjian Fazhan Guihua Yanjiu),” a state-sponsored research project, scholars and state officials clearly claim that “Globalization means that China urgently needs a world city.”³⁸ The report characterizes a world city as a city with a developed economy, abundant international cultural exchanges, excellent municipal management and infrastructure, and a well-protected ecological environment. The report stressed that “the lack of a world city means [China’s] falling behind in the global race,” indicating that the reason “China needs a world city” is more or less a matter of nationalist pride, being proof that China is an emerging world power. Consequently, from the perspective of these Chinese planners, Beijing as the national capital represents the best candidate for the Chinese world city. In a way, the search for globalization is a new way of describing the old aspiration of *jiegui* (linking tracks) and internationalization. In this light, when Beijingers imagine Beijing as a global city, what they conceive has less to do with a market mechanism, state regulations or international capital flows, but rather involves the availability of international commodities, flows of foreign people and cultures, and material abundance. Even though Beijing may not yet be a city of global economic importance, China has become increasingly closely engaged with international society and the global economy since the early 1980s. As a Chinese metropolis and the capital city, Beijing has inevitably become closely connected to the international society and has assumed certain characteristics as a strategic global center and nexus for accessing new markets.

³⁸ RE: <http://news.cic.tsinghua.edu.cn/new/news.php?id=2064> and <http://house.sina.com.cn/n/b/2001-10-18/4063.html>.

To advance economic development, Dengist reform policies stress economic marketization, international relationships and industrialization. To realize these objectives, various policies have been implemented, including facilitating the development of Township and Village Enterprises (*Xiangzhen Qiye*) (Fan, et al. 1996; Murphy 2000; Oi 1999; Wen and Chang 1999; Zhang 1999), establishing Special Economic Zones, opening up coastal cities (*kaifang yanhai chengshi*), and implementing grand regional development plans, such as the Great Development of the West Project (*Xibu Da Kaifa*) starting in 2002. The development of Township and Village Enterprises in the 1980s resulted in the sudden expansion of small towns. Deepened links with the global economy further strengthened the strategic importance of big cities, metropolises, megacities and metropolitan belts such as the much touted metropolitan area of the Yangzi River Delta, the metropolitan area of the Pearl River Delta, and the Jingjintang (Beijing-Tianjin-Tanggu) metropolitan area. The Great Development of the West Project also emphasizes the pivotal function of a few major cities, including Chongqing, Chengdu and Xi'an. Beijing's rapid development during recent years is not unique, but rather is part of these wider transformations of the national urban system. Examining the diverse reasons for the development of, for example, Beijing, the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, Xi'an, and numerous smaller towns since the Reform Era, it is clear that urbanization is a process involving not only urban areas and urban populations but also rural areas and rural populations, and that the level of urbanization of a specific place is determined by its strategic position in regional, national, and global systems. Beijing as an aspiring global city is one of the strategic places emerging from the increasing integration between Chinese and world markets.

To analyze the qualities Beijing has obtained to be a strategic place in both the national and global contexts, I argue that it is necessary to consider Beijing's identity as the national capital, especially the capital of a still powerful socialist state. On the one hand, as the state determines to build its capital into a world city to showcase the development of China, demonstrated in the choice of Beijing as the Chinese candidate city for the 2008 Olympic Games, Beijing enjoys advantages in urban development relative to other Chinese cities, including the development of the infrastructure and telecommunications systems essential for a global economic center. On the other hand, as the socialist state remains the most powerful regulator of the Chinese market, international economic activities, and relevant policies, and since many successful entrepreneurs either were previously state officials or enjoy close relationships with state officials, firms enjoy invaluable advantages in being close to the central government and key market figures located in Beijing.³⁹ The following uses the case of Imar Film to demonstrate the strategic benefits that Beijing offers to transnational firms.

Imar Film (Yima Dianying Jishu Youxian Gongsi), a joint venture between Xi'an Film Studio (Xi'an Dianying Zhipian Chang) and Rock Music Taiwan (Taiwan Gunshi), was established by American Peter Loehr in Beijing in 1996. By early 2001, Imar Film had produced four films: *Aiqing Mala Tang*, *Meili Xin Shijie*, *Shower* (Xizao), and *All the Way* (Zou Daodi). All four films ranked among the most successful Chinese movies of their years, in terms of both profits and awards, both domestically and overseas. Loehr

³⁹ Researchers of the Beijing Development Institute at Peking University suggest that Beijing's advantages over other Chinese cities in becoming a global city include: (1) it is the national information center and (2) it is the Chinese city that exerts the greatest influence nationwide. As the capital, Beijing controls national information and policy making and thus has great advantages as a center of information services (including the media and culture industries and education) and finance. (re: http://www.bjdi.org/baogao/ppt/Olympics_talk1028.ppt).

believes that film in China is entertainment for young urban adults. Chinese middle school students are always studying, college students are poor, and older people prefer to stay home and watch TV. Only young adults have the money and time to see movies.⁴⁰ Hence, from the outset, Loher set two goals for Imar: first, let young adults (nianqing ren) make movies for a young adult audience and, second, make Chinese movies that primarily targeted the Mainland Chinese market. Indeed, all Imar films are considered successful “domestic” films. Few among the audience know that the single most important figure behind the films is an American (not to mention the small but significant number of foreigners involved in the production teams). Loher emphasized that he was not an expert on Chinese culture and did not set out to make films about Chinese culture. Rather, his films were about contemporary urban issues, subject matter shared across national and cultural boundaries.

Though Loher loves Chinese movies, he did not go to China because of his passion for Chinese culture but because of the potential of the Chinese media market. Since 1989, Loher had worked for Amuse Production House, a major Japanese entertainment production and distribution company, introducing Hollywood movies to Japan and distributing Japanese TV series in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia. Later, he worked for Rock Music, a leading Taiwanese music and entertainment production company in Taipei, before finally ending up in Beijing. He identifies himself more as a businessman who happens to work in the culture industry than as a highly cultural person. Though he also did screen writing and contributed the stories of all of Imar’s films, his main role was as a producer and distributor, i.e., making proposals, seeking investors, controlling expenses, doing marketing, establishing and maintaining

⁴⁰ Interview with Peter Loher by the author.

media relations, and finally bringing the films to movie theaters throughout China for distribution. As his foreign colleagues in Imar commented, Loher's contribution to the Chinese film production industry lies more in introducing a new Euro-American and Japanese system of media production and distribution than in creating stories.⁴¹ Imar's success has not only set an example for Chinese film professionals but also has attracted and facilitated foreign film production giants in entering the Chinese market. The latter effect became apparent when Loehr left Imar Film at the end of 2001 and established Ming Zhizuo, a foreign film production company with operations in Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Japan, and Beijing, to take advantage of the abundant investment capital available from the US, Japan, and overseas Chinese to make some big budget films.⁴²

The story of Imar Film evokes the theorization of Saskia Sassen regarding strategic place. In terms of business operations, the media industry is no different from other business. Imar chose to locate in Beijing for strategic reasons: first, its goal was to win Chinese markets before entering overseas markets; second, its target audience comprised "urban young adults". Imar Film's most valuable asset is Loher's marketing know-how, obtained from his rich experience of operating in the transnational and capitalist markets. By locating his company in Beijing, Loher knew he could gain invaluable advantages that would help ensure successful marketing in China, including: sensitivity to national changes, convenient media networking, ample domestic and transnational investment capital, high quality talent pool, advanced telecommunication infrastructure, potential to influence media policy makers, and abundant transnational

⁴¹ Interview with the sales manager of Imar Film by the author.

⁴² Though mainly invested by Rock Music of Taiwan and managed by an American, Imar, based on financial technicalities, was considered a Chinese film production company. As a Chinese company, Imar can neither legally obtain sufficient finances for big budget project nor finish post-shooting outside China, meaning that Imar was limited to Chinese film production technology.

connections. All of these strategic benefits explain why Imar Film located in Beijing rather than Xi'an, despite its partnerships with Xi'an Film Studio, or some other less "central" location. Based on similar operating concerns, it becomes apparent why, to produce high-cost and technologically-advanced Chinese films targeting in the global market, Loher established branch offices of his new production company (Ming Zhizuo) in Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Japan, and Beijing.

Conclusion

This chapter examines images of Beijing among those located elsewhere, including urban and rural locations outside the city, and the social periphery within the city, with the aim of considering the transformation of the city from alternative perspectives. Through examining how Beijing is imagined by those living "elsewhere", I aim to illustrate not only what type of place Beijing is becoming but also the evolving relationship between Beijing and the nation-state. Additionally, the various images of Beijing by people elsewhere showed how these places are variously affected by both China's economic reform and the global economy, and demonstrated an emerging hierarchical urban system.

I propose that in contemporary China, mass media and migrants, particularly migrant laborers, are the two pillars mediating a shared national imagination and create a national community. Modern mass media technologies have efficiently brought images and sounds of urban lifestyles and state voices to villages. Moreover, migrant laborers

frequently travel between urban and rural places, and among different urban areas, enriching the perspectives of both the urban and rural populations. The next chapter focuses on how migrant laborers are key mediators both in cities and nationally.

5

MIGRANT LABORERS AS MEDIATORS WITHIN THE CITY AND BETWEEN THE CITY AND THE COUNTRYSIDE

The previous two chapters addressed the emerging and growing differences within cities and between regions resulting from the economic and administrative transformations of the Reform Era and global economic impacts. This chapter argues that migrant laborers (*minggong*, *nongmingong* or *wailai wugong ren* in Chinese), as a population with high inter-regional mobility and newcomers to cities, are vital financial and socio-cultural mediators of these differences. I propose that migrant laborers mediate the production of new social positions and social stratification in Beijing, and mediate between unevenly developing urban and rural China.

Migrant Laborers as Mediators

The farmland had become dried and ‘smoky’ (i.e. barren)! Who would leave their children if they had other choices! (*dili dou gande maoyanle! Youbanfa de hua, shuihui likai haizi ne!*)

-- Hua’an, a migrant woman from Anhui, regarding why she left home for Beijing.⁴³

After more than 20 years of Dengist reform, particularly the rapid economic changes of the 1990s, the rural-urban dichotomy embedded in the socialist administrative system

⁴³ From the author’s interview with Cui’an and Hua’an on July 30, 2000.

(including the urban versus rural household registration system (*hukou*) and associated dichotomized relations with state provided social welfare services) developed into an economic and geopolitical gulf.⁴⁴ The gulf between the urban and the rural, particularly the superiority of urban people and urban life versus the arduous rural lifestyle, was widely felt and the disadvantaged rural poor poured into the cities. The issues associated with the large scale migration from the countryside to the city are among the major concerns of the reform period, if not the single most difficult problem of the period, and have attracted the attention of many state officials and scholars (re: Davin 1999; Dutton 1998; Solinger 1999; Yan Hairong 2003a; Yan Hairong 2003b; Zhang 2001). On the one hand, the substantial reserves of rural labor were necessary to economic reform and national and urban development, while on the other hand, hundreds of millions of unregulated and undocumented domestic migrants (collectively known as Blind Flow, *Mangliu*) were considered to threaten urban and national order.

In the early days of the reform, the state tended to ignore administrative needs related to migrant laborers, and attempted to control “risks” associated with the “Blind Flow” by limiting them to temporary urban lives, as reflected in the *zhanzhuzheng*, or temporary resident card, with which they are issued. Around 2000, the state changed its emphasis and strategy to one of regulating domestic migration and the relations of migrant laborers with urban residents. Key policies were announced during the “Two Meetings (*Lianghui*, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and the National People's Congress (NPC))” since the early 2000s, including policies governing *Sannong* (agriculture, peasants, and farm villages) and policies offering

⁴⁴ For discussion of the impact of Maoist socialist policies regarding rural-urban development on the rural-urban dichotomy and internal migration during the reform years, see: *Class and Social Stratification in Post-Revolution China* (Watson 1984).

increased assistance to disadvantaged groups (i.e., migrant laborers, laid off workers, peasants, and the disabled), both of which sets of policies affect migrant laborers.

Most scholars interested in Chinese domestic migrants mirror the state itself in their concern with solving the “problems” associated with migrants and the reconfiguration of urban and rural populations. Other scholars celebrate the mobility and flexibility of migrant laborers and see them as the true agents of flexible accumulation in China’s new market economy.⁴⁵ Recently, anthropologists have conducted ethnographic research on changing urban configurations and urban-rural relationships, focusing on the experience of migrant laborers (Solinger 1999; Yan Hairong 2003a; Yan Hairong 2003b; Zhang 2001). This study proposes that migrant laborers unintentionally became mediators between privileged urban population and desperately poor villagers, and among *newly emerging groups* within rapidly transforming cities. Saskia Sassen (2006, Chapter 7) argues that global economies are built by supposedly valueless actors such as migrant laborers and women. By using the concept of mediators, like Sassen, I wish to emphasize how valueless economic actors – such as migrant laborers – are crucial for the development and social transformation of Beijing and other metropolitan cities.

Following the loosening of regulations governing movement and residency in the Reform Era, migrant laborers traveled between regions and had personal contact with people from diverse social hierarchies. Migrant laborers, on the one hand personify the rural for urban populations and introduce the rural to urban scenes, while on the other hand they transfer money and goods from the cities to their families in the countryside. I argue that migrants are more than neutral carriers of images, money, and goods, but are also the main *mediators* of the emerging differences between regions and within cities.

⁴⁵ Re: Yan Hairong (2003b) for a succinct discussion on these two diverse views of migrant laborers.

For example, as the remittances migrant laborers send home have become the major income of their home provinces, what migrant laborers mediate is not only the uneven accumulation of wealth among cities, small towns, and villages, but also ideas regarding how to spend the money obtained.

In May 2000, when Cui'an had been in Beijing for only three months, she claimed that she left her children at home and came to work in Beijing to save money to pay for her son's wedding and for re-building the family house. She expected her ten year old daughter to leave school following her graduation from elementary school since the tuition was a burden for the family and education was unimportant for a female. She and her husband believed that learning practical skills, such as carpentry, was more important for making a better living than going to school. Still, they supported their son in continuing his education for as long as he wished. In November, in the lead up to her trip home to celebrate Chinese New Year, Cui'an happily reported to me that she would start buying bricks when she returned home. Although they did not have enough money to buy all the bricks they needed for their new house, they would first buy what they could afford and stack them in their yard (*"Xian ba zhuan ma qilai."*). The money they earned and saved that year would go to pay for tuition fees and tax during the coming year, bricks, gifts for relatives and neighbors (many of whom helped look after her parents-in-law and kids when they were away), and on contributions to relatives and neighbors who were starting their house building projects.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Those who receive money from Cui'an and her family for building their own houses will return the favor by giving Cui'an and her family money when they are ready to start their own house construction project. This system ensures that whoever is ready to start building their house can obtain enough cash to pay for the project (according to interview done by the author with Cui'an). The system resembles an autonomous saving mechanism, as well as reflecting typical reciprocity relationships based on gift-giving. This system was one reason that Cui'an and her family had difficulty altering the way in which they

After another five months or so, in April 2001, over a year after migrating to Beijing, Cui'an told me that she and her husband had changed their minds about how to allocate their savings, prioritizing the education of *both* their son and their daughter over re-building the family house. Following their second reunion with their children after migrating to Beijing, during their trip back home for Chinese New Year in 2002, Cui'an brought their son – though not their daughter – to Beijing to live with them and attend the school for children of migrant laborers (*mingong zidi xuexiao*) in Village Huai, their place of residence in Beijing. This decision resulted from discussions between the two of them, and was also influenced by discussions with other migrants from Anhui, and by their urban contacts. This decision is likely to impact their family and neighbors back in Anhui.

By arguing that migrant laborers are the main mediators between the urban and rural, I do not propose that migrant laborers are agents of China's market economy;⁴⁷ rather, they are an economically, culturally, and socially disadvantaged group, and suffering economic and administrative marginalization during the Reform Era. Nor do I propose that the money migrant laborers earn in cities contributes significantly to closing the economic gap between Chinese cities and the countryside. Rather, I take mediator to mean that migrant laborers, as a mobile population, facilitate the flow of images, ideas, and capital between unevenly developing urban and countryside areas, and moreover, unlike other mediators such as television and other mass media, migrant laborers facilitate tangible and material flows and thus affect how the rural and urban populations

managed their money. Investing money in their children or in private business at the expense of house rebuilding risks may damage their relationships with relatives and neighbors.

⁴⁷ For critiques of seeing migrant laborers as agents of China's market economy and the flexible accumulation of capital see: *Spectralization of the rural: Reinterpreting the labor mobility of rural young women in post-Mao China* (Yan Hairong 2003b).

imagine each other.⁴⁸ As mobility is frequently the most valuable “asset” of the poor rural population, witnessing migrant laborers traveling between their rural homes and cities, working in the cities, bringing back cash, televisions and other gifts for the New Year, and piling up bricks in their courtyards, provides cause for optimism among the non-migrant rural population. In short, migrant labor represents the urban and the rural to each other and helps the rural and urban populations in their mutual identity production. I argue that, during a period of increasing differentiation between the cities and the countryside, during which large numbers of people are traveling between these two worlds, rural people and places can be better understood by knowledge of urban people and places; and vice versa. Additionally, and even more importantly for this dissertation, I argue that since migrant laborers live in cities and are positioned at the bottom of the urban social strata, they affect emerging social hierarchies and groups in cities.

Characteristics of Labor Migration in Reform China

Mediators between Regions and within Cities

Since the early 1980s, China has experienced unprecedented levels of domestic migration in terms of both frequency and numbers of people involved. Many Chinese domestic labor migrants live in multiple host cities during their years of migration, and they frequently move back and forth between their host cities and their homes. At the very least, most labor migrants return home annually for the Chinese New Year. Consequently, the

⁴⁸ Linda Seligmann, in her study of Peru, argues that the market women known as *cholas* are a social and ethnic group *in between* Peruvian rural and urban populations (1989). Her study and argument is an interesting reference to the idea of migrant laborers as mediator addressed in this dissertation.

pattern of Chinese labor migration differs from transnational migration, involving the continuous movement of people rather than a series of single and permanent relocations. Regarding the quantity and frequency of Chinese labor migration, migrant laborers are continuously traveling among villages, towns and cities nationwide.

When migrant laborers move to urban areas, the money, skills, commodities and ideas they obtain travel back to their homes. The flow of people from the countryside to the cities is continuous, and there is frequent and large-scale trafficking of capital, goods, information, ideas and values back to rural homes via wire transfers, the postal service, and visits home. Moreover, the circulation of people, goods, capital, information, and ideas has not been limited to two-way traffic between specific pairs of home villages and host cities. As some migrant laborers live a nomadic lifestyle involving moving from place to place, they also transmit their working knowledge and skills between urban centers.

From the perspective of urban populations, migrant laborers *are* the rural. For the urban population, migrant laborers are the main representatives of rural China. Migrant laborers embody the spread of the rural into urban areas, including the homes and residences of the urban population. From the perspective of villagers, their families and neighbors working in cities are, alongside television, an important image on the city and urban life. They bring back pieces of the city, for example stories of their host cities and the lives of their employers; technologies such as television sets and VCD machines; urban styles in hairstyle, clothes and other areas; and food, particularly special foods of their host cities (*techang*). Villagers used the urban pieces brought back by migrants to map the nature of the city and of urban life.

Migrant laborers provide a vantage point for reconsidering the meaning of the urban-rural dichotomy (*chengxiang*). Living in cities and working as construction or factory workers, sale persons, and domestic servants, most migrant laborers are continuously seen as peasants (*nongmin*) and their behaviors and appearances are continuously considered rural. Urban people assign these labels and migrant laborers themselves largely accept them, making peasants a more diverse group than those who earn their living chiefly by farming, and making being rural an inherited status. How migrant laborers see themselves and are received – in rural homes and in the cities that host them – demonstrated that, urban and rural are subjective concepts, and the distinction between them is fluid and relative.

The example of Zhenchuan Township (Zhenchuan Zhen) demonstrates the relativity of urban-rural distinctions. Zhenchuan Township in the Yulin District of Northern Shaanxi is a regional market town mainly comprising a single short main street. Vendors line both sides of the street to sell meats, vegetables, fruits, yarns, daily necessities such as pots and scissors, and entertainment items such as magazines, novels, tapes, and VCDs. The agricultural produce and livestock for sale are all locally grown and raised. Magazines, novels, and VCDs are brought by vendors, typically from Guangdong, to major cities in Shaanxi and Sichuan, and then to Zhenchuan via Yulin. The main street is dusty and unsealed. The buildings flanking this main street are mostly old single-storey courtyard houses that form labyrinth-like neighborhoods behind the street façade. Minivans gather at one end of the main street to drop off and pick up shoppers from nearby villages. For residents of Yulin, Xi'an, Beijing, Shanghai or Guangzhou, Zhenchuan is definitely rural. Yet for villagers of nearby area, Zhenchuan –

as the administrative and market center, having *loufang* (multi-storey houses), and attracting businessmen and goods from bigger cities outside the Yulin area, is undoubtedly urban.

The hierarchy of places from remote villages up to center cities, for example from Hongliu Village, through Zhenchuan Township, to Yulin, and finally Xi'an, and the relative perceptions among them is not new. What is interesting is that, behind the familiar hierarchy of place, the foundation of the relationship between the urban and rural is changing. Towards the beginning of the Reform Era at the end of the Twentieth Century, the relationship between cities and the countryside changed from a continuum to a hierarchical relationship between two distinct categories. Many urban residents no longer have roots in smaller towns or rural villages. The majority of the urban population considers the cities their permanent homes and has either no desire to return to a rural hometown or no longer has any native village or small town to which they can return. Additionally, compared to the few decades of communism that preceded the Economic Reform, during which time many urban residents were either "sent down to the countryside" to learn from the peasants or relocated to inland provinces to support national development projects, the urban population of the Reform Era have much less personal experience of less developed areas and country life. On the one hand, villages, towns and cities, though at different speeds, are all undergoing modernization and urbanization. Therefore, except for the most remote places, it is probably more useful to think in terms of differing degrees of urbanity, rather than the traditional dichotomy of city versus village. On the other hand, the traditional close relationships between cities

and countryside have weakened and the segregation of cities, particularly metropolitan areas, from the rural has increased.

In an age when urban-rural relations are changing more significantly and rapidly than ever before and when city and countryside are simultaneously more similar and also more isolated from each other, the role of mediators across urban-rural and urban social differences becomes significant. While many urban residents (including those migrants who stay on and become privileged urban residents) no longer retain close connections with their native origins, migrant laborers, who come to the city seeking refuge from the impoverished countryside, still maintain strong connections with their places of origin. Migrant laborers, as subjects of both cities and countryside, link the two realms. The importance of migrant laborers lies not only in the fact that they inhabit both the urban and rural worlds, but also in that they are critical to social transformation and identity production in both cities and the countryside.

Mobility is their Last Resort

Ningning, a very beautiful girl from the Mizhi County of Northern Shaanxi, had dreamed of leaving home ever since she was a child. Her first chance to leave came when she was just fifteen, and she seized it without hesitation. Nothing could change her mind, not even her father threatening to disown her. She accepted the invitation of a slight acquaintance, an older man, to go with him to work in Xi'an. The trip to Xi'an was tough. Following the man, Ningning and four other girls of similar age from the same region walked for three days across the notorious sandy paths of the Loess Plateau of Northern Shaanxi before commencing a two-day journey by rickety bus through the numerous ravines

(*shangou*) of the impoverished region. After finally arriving in Xi'an, Ningning owned nothing but a debt to the labor recruiter for travel expenses and brokerage (for job) fees. She had little choice but to move into the apartment of the man's sister, in downtown Xi'an, and begin working as a waitress in a Karaoke and Dancing Hall. She addressed the man as Uncle (*Shushu*) and his sister as My Aunt (*Wo Yi*), despite not being related to them. She paid off her debt to them in monthly installments, as well as paying them rent. When I met her, three years after her move to Xi'an, she was a waitress in the restaurant of a four-star hotel in Xi'an. Without a legal working permit, she was a temporary employee with no contract or guaranteed benefits. Nevertheless, she considered herself to have a good job, and believed she had earned it through her cleverness, diligence and good looks. She had moved out of the apartment of her 'Aunt' but still visited her and regularly gave her monetary gifts. Although her 'Aunt' had treated her badly when she first arrived in Xi'an, she said that she did not want to be "ungrateful (*wang'enfuyi*)". Ningning's ultimate dream was to move to Shenzhen or Zhuhai in the South, where she hoped to make more money and have an even better life.

What drives Ningning and millions of other young girls like her to leave their families in villages and small towns to take up often less than respectable jobs in cities, where they endure personal hardship, to say nothing of potential risks to their safety? How about the male migrants who follow their male relatives and neighbors to work on one construction site after another, wandering nomadically from city to city? What makes millions of mothers hard-heartedly leave their young children behind in their rural homes while they move to the cities to work as domestic helpers? Life in the city is not easy, and the separation from family and social discrimination from urban residents only add to the

difficulties. Cui'an told me several times that despite living and working in the national capital, she had no wish to visit any of the famous tourist sites, such as the Forbidden City or the Great Wall, nor to visit the glamorous shopping malls. Her reason for avoiding these places was because the inhabitants of these places looked down on her and saw her as a country bumpkin (*xiangxiaren*). She saw the city purely as a place for work, not a place for family or fun. However, despite the toughness of urban life, villagers continue to move to cities in the millions.

Ningning left home to escape the materially and culturally impoverished countryside. She said that she did not want her life to be a repeat of that of her parents, and her only hope of achieving this was to leave. Anthropologist Yan Hairong (2003b) gives a good account of how the countryside was considered unlivable by many young rural girls, together with their zealous desire to leave to live a life fit for a human. For older migrants (i.e. those in their late twenties and thirties) such as Cui'an and Hua'an, migration represented their only means of satisfying the basic needs of their families, including paying taxes, paying tuition fees for their children's basic education, and, if possible, maintaining or rebuilding their decrepit family houses. Their agricultural produce generated only enough income to keep them from starving but could no longer satisfy the most basic monetary needs of their families.

One thing that migrant laborers of different backgrounds share in common is that *mobility* itself is the most valuable resource they possess, effectively their last resort in building a better life. Whereas restrictions on migration have reduced during the reform era, there were still many who, despite wishing for a better urban or metropolitan life, do not see migration – literally abandoning their Household Registration (*hukou*) – as a valid

choice. In most cases, these individuals hesitate to take a chance on the uncertainty of migration at the expense of the welfare and security associated with the hukou, danwei and social connections (*guanxi*) they enjoy in their native places. These are typically people who are less economically desperate than the poorest members of the peasantry. The explanation of Chen Guanyi, a television program producer, for why he and his friends did not leave Xi'an for Beijing is typical of this mentality (see Chapter 4 for details). For migrant laborers such as Cui'an, Hua'an and Ningning, life without leaving home was simply too difficult and hopeless – as vividly demonstrated by Hua'an's description of barren farmland. In contrast, Chen Guanyi and other professionals with stable, state-assigned jobs were simultaneously protected and limited by the hukou system.

Lisa was a college graduate in Xi'an. She was a single child in her early twenties. Although she had many dreams relating to her future, particularly dreams about the possibilities associated with living elsewhere, she was intimidated to talk about them. Her father, a neat looking man in his fifties, had retired from a high-level managerial position within a big state-owned enterprise in Xi'an and had gradually accumulated respectable assets through diverse investments. He lived a materially comfortable life in Xi'an. Her mother, who I never met, worked and lived in Hainan, the island province located in the South China Sea, an area widely considered a testing ground for capitalist development and famous for its tourism. Nevertheless, Lisa's father believed that it was better for her to stay in Xi'an and to work for a state institute rather than a private company, explaining that stability and state protection were more valuable than anything else. He arranged for Lisa to get a job as an instructor (*jiaoguan*) at a college in Xi'an, with a salary of about

1000 RMB (125 USD) per month. Lisa appeared dissatisfied with her job but maintained that it was OK and she believed her father had her best interests in mind.

Yan was another college graduate in Xi'an, also in her early twenties, and also a single child. Her grandparents (on both the maternal and paternal sides) were PLA military officers who were assigned to Xinjiang, the province in the far north-west of China, to develop the remote, sparsely populated and unstable region, during the 1950s. Her parents, after experiencing, according to them, the political zeal of the Cultural Revolution, managed to finish their advanced education and settled down in a research institute in Xi'an in the early 1970s. Since then, they had been well looked after by the institute, within which Yan grew up. When I met her parents in 2000, they were both retired. Their goal was to save sufficient money for Yan to pursue advanced education abroad, and they seemed quite satisfied with their simple yet comfortable life in the institute and in Xi'an. Yan worked for foreign-invested companies in Xi'an, while simultaneously preparing to take TOFEL and admission exams for local graduate schools. Her salary typically ranged between 1500 and 2000 RMB (188 to 250 USD) per month. I asked her if she had ever considered moving to a bigger city such as Beijing or Shanghai. She believed that it was difficult for her to leave Xi'an because of the housing and other benefits her parents enjoyed through the institute, meaning they would have to remain in Xi'an, and she would also have to remain there to take care of them.

Zhu Yun, the retired university professor I discussed in Chapter 4, lived in an assigned dormitory with his wife and the family of his youngest son, including the son, daughter-in-law and their preschool grandchild, on the university campus in a southern suburb of Xi'an. On a typical day, Zhu Yun and his wife took care of their grandson and

cooked lunch and dinner. His son and daughter-in-law, both in their mid 30s, worked during the day and came home around 5pm for the family dinner. At one of these family dinners, the daughter-in-law, who had grown up in Xi'an and whose parents also lived in Xi'an, asked me about my experience of living in the U.S. and in Beijing, and my parents' whereabouts. She then commented, with obvious emotion, that "most young people now indulge themselves in their own dreams, and care little for their parents." She continued that even though she and her husband also felt tempted by opportunities in more prosperous coastal cities, they could not go because they needed to care for their parents. "How can you take care of your parents without living with or close to them?" she asked me heatedly.

With the Household Registration policy and related social welfare systems being gradually but fundamentally modified, the "adventure" of migrant laborers, in a sense, seemed to serve as an experiment preparing for further social change, an experiment carried out at migrants' own risk, yet with state consent, if not encouragement.

Friedmann suggested that, to ensure the steady development of China, it is important to maintain a balance between change and continuity (2005, 119). The peculiar maintenance of this balance is demonstrated by the contrast between the migrant laborers who continue to hold rural hukou while providing a critical production force for cities and the substantial population that remain attached to their state-assigned jobs and hukou. Migrant laborers, albeit reluctantly and unintentionally, change and transcend the social order. Thus many of the changes in the post-socialist state involve the movement of migrant laborers.

Migrant Laborers as Subjects of both Cities and the Countryside

Even though migrant laborers moved frequently and over long distances, they nevertheless rarely completely abandoned their native-origins, and typically maintained close material and psychological connections with their rural homes. No matter how far they were from home and how much time they spent in cities, migrant laborers are subjects of both their host cities and their rural homes. Their actions in regularly sending money home, returning home for Chinese New Year, and living and socializing mostly with migrants from the same provinces, as well as their being treated as inferiors and outsiders by established urban residents, all contribute to their belief that they ultimately belonged to their native places will eventually be compelled to return to their villages. On the one hand they work very hard to survive and make money in cities, gradually becoming an indispensable part of rapidly developing cities, but on the other hand they, continue to identify with their rural homes.

Contrasting sharply with migrant laborers is another mobile group: the rich professional elite. Compared to migrant laborers, this group moves frequently and freely. They not only move to different cities to work but also travel for leisure. Unlike those who depend heavily on the welfare offered by danwei and hukou, the rich professionals have enough resources of their own to disregard their hukou and “personal file (*dang'an*)”, and even to obtain a more useful hukou. Unlike migrant laborers, who are often identified by their places of work and of origin, the professional elite seem free of native-place identity. In fact, one of the characteristics of the professional elite, particularly transnational professionals, is that they seem free of place-identity of any sort, but instead identify themselves by their cosmopolitan quality.

When I asked Leena, the editor of a Beijing fashion magazine, where she was from, she said the question was too difficult to answer. She had spent her childhood living with her grandparents in the former French concession area of Shanghai. With a smile, she told me about how her grandpa would take her to cafés in the afternoon, and occasionally to eat steak at a famous Western restaurant (*xicanting*).¹ During her teenage years, she moved to live with her parents in Kaili, the capital of the Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture in the mountainous, poor, and undeveloped Guizhou province in Southwest China. She seldom mentioned her time in Kaili. When she did, it was to mention schools she had attended, as well as her polite and distanced relationship with her parents. As a place, Kaili seemed of marginal significance to her teenage memories. When she was 18 years old, she left Guizhou for Beijing to attend college, and had remained living in Beijing ever since. When I met her in her late twenties, she owned an apartment in suburban Beijing, vacationed in San Francisco and Hawaii, visited Paris for business, returned to Guizhou to visit her parents once a year, and, whenever possible, would go to Shanghai to buy new clothes. Eventually she answered my question with one of her own: “Where am I from?”

The urban professional elite such as Leena are not strongly bound to the specific place and time they inhabit. Members of this group easily transplant and rebuild their lives, and identities, wherever their careers take them. Therefore, while migrant laborers are often economically and socially inferior to other groups, compared to immobile populations, such as Chen Guanyi (the Xi'an media producer) and Shifang (the Beijing hutong mother), and the locale-indifferent wealthy professionals, migrant laborers, as

¹ According to the conversation between the author and Leena when walking together in early September, 2000 while Leena showed the author the neighborhood in Shanghai where she spent her childhood.

subjects of both cities and villages, contribute heavily to “suturing” the material and cultural gaps between the urban and the rural.

Bringing the Urban to the Rural

During her first year of working in Beijing, Cui'an sent home more than 10000 RMB (1250 USD). Even Ningning, who considered returning to her Northern Shaanxi home her last resort, regarded supporting her parents financially as one of the main reasons for her leaving. Statistical data shows that the money sent home by migrant laborers contributed significantly to the gross income of the recipient provinces. The money these provinces received represents a significant help. For the families left behind, remittances are crucial to their life, particularly for paying taxes, tuition, and healthcare. Once basic daily needs are met, surplus money can then be spent or invested to obtain comforts, including buying home entertainment devices such as televisions and VCD machines and building or renovating family homes.

Dreams of New Family Houses

“A shining, tiled, multi-story family house” is possibly the most powerful dream propelling millions of Chinese peasants to leave home to make money. When traveling by minivan through rural Jiangsu and Zhejiang, I was impressed by the numerous new and sometimes quite splendid multi-story, tiled residential buildings that dotted the farming fields and waterways. The sight gave the impression of a wealthy countryside

and provided strong visual evidence of both a rising rural economy and the large numbers of workers and businessmen these rural areas had sent to the cities. In the countryside of less developed regions, new houses are rarer and generally less impressive. Nevertheless, as migrants from these places keep on sending remittances home, new houses gradually mushroom and the landscape changes. The relative rarity of new houses only reinforces their value and stimulates the desire to obtain them.

Cui'an's eyes brightened and her voice became unusually assertive as she explained that the reason she had left her children to come to Beijing was "of course to build a new family house." A new family house is a dream out of both symbolic and practical significance. Their house was falling apart – the roof was falling in, the wooden beams and pillars were rotten, and windows and doors were broken. The house even lacked running water and a bathroom, meaning that to bathe (something she did only occasionally) meant boiling a basin of hot water on the kitchen stove, bringing the basin into the door-less bedroom, setting up a "plastic tent" bought in a nearby town to provide privacy, and finally quickly wiping oneself down over the basin of water with a wet towel. The daily inconveniences of their current house certainly played an important part in Cui'an's yearning for a new house. However, she made it clear that the most important motivation behind building a new house was to help her son marry a "good girl" in the future: girls with good quality (*suzhi*) would obviously prefer to marry into a decent family, meaning one that owned a decent family home. The importance of a good daughter-in-law simply could not be emphasized enough for the future prosperity of the family.

Cui'an and her husband, like many other migrant laborers, made steady progress towards their goal of house building. Speaking to me after her first visit home during Chinese New Year in 2001, Cui'an beamed broadly and announced that "Bricks [for their future house] have been piled up in our courtyard (*zhuan yijing zai yuanzi li ma qilai le*)!"² She was obviously extremely excited to be launching her dream project of rebuilding the family house. The piled-up bricks made her dream concrete and tangible. Besides buying bricks, during that same trip Cui'an and her husband had also given a considerable portion of their savings to a neighbor who had started building his own house.³ This act was not done purely out of courtesy or generosity, but rather represented a typical example of gift economy (re: Mauss 2000). Cui'an expected that when they were ready to build their house, all of those who had received their financial support would reciprocate by giving them money that would be crucial to the success of their construction plans.

Cui'an's hometown was a small, poor village near Lake Chao (Chao Hu) in Anhui. Traditionally, most of the villagers subsisted on farming and a little fishing. Income from agriculture could hardly support their basic needs, and since the early 1990s, capable adults had flocked to the cities seeking a better income. Patches of farmland thus were abandoned.⁴ The village was inhabited mainly by the elderly and the very young, mostly living in decrepit houses. However, sharing the same dream as Cui'an, many villagers

² According to interview with Cui'an by the author.

³ Migrant laborers and rural peasants gradually saved the money to buy bricks and other construction materials needed for building a new house over many years, it being impossible to do so within a shorter period of time. After gathering the required materials they began the actual building.

⁴ After her trip home during the 2001 Chinese New Year, Cui'an cheerfully informed me that, though their family farmland was left unworked (*pao-huang*), the land had not yet run completely wild. She was glad because she would not need to go through the tough process of preparing the ground for planting (*kai-huang*) when she returned home to take up farming again. (According to a conversation with the informant) This comment confirmed to me that migrant laborers did not intend to fully abandon their farmland.

expected that in a few years the village would be filled with attractive multi-story tiled houses, fitted out with running water and other modern conveniences. Additionally, some villagers hoped to use the money they earned in the city to set up small shops. The landscape can be expected to eventually look very different from its present state, being more industrialized and urbanized. The key to achieving these dreams is the residents leaving home to work as migrant laborers in the cities.

“... The countryside is moving to the city, while the city is encroaching on the countryside. Large swaths of China, which were once farmland, are now urban industrial sprawl,” Louisa Lim in her report *The End of Agriculture in China* gave the above description of China’s urban-rural transformation.⁵ Urban sprawl is not just physical but is also mental. Migrant laborers bring back much more than tangible goods; they also introduce new ideas and values, including a market mindset and self-awareness of their personal ‘quality’ (*suzhi*), both of which values favor urban lifestyles at the expense of rural traditions. Besides the returning migrant laborers as living demonstrations of urban values, Television and VCDs are favorite gifts that migrant laborers bring home, and undoubtedly facilitate these elusive cultural changes.

Introducing the City through Mass Media

On a brisk early evening in October 2000, my host in Xijiang – a Miao village in the Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous prefecture in Guizhou – asked if I would like to visit her friend at the other end of the village.⁶ Still warmed by a dinner of spicy hot pot, we set off along the simple earth path that ran from her house, located on a steep

⁵ Re: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5411325>

⁶ For information about Xijiang and the Miao, see: *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics* (Schein 2000).

slope, and down to the riverbank. The path took us along the river, passing several neighboring Miao houses immediately to our right, and many more Miao houses decorating the steep mountain to our left on the other side of the river. Dogs barked furiously at us from the neighboring houses as we passed, only stopping when we turned onto the bridge at the bottom of the valley and crossed the river.

It was refreshing and peaceful to experience the surrounding mountains and the murmur of the river. The silhouettes of the traditional Miao houses on stilts (*Diaojiaolou*, literally “hanging houses”) in the dim light of the moon and stars added to the serene atmosphere. After crossing the river, we turned at the post office and entered the main street of the village. The street was flanked by two-story houses. Atypically for the village, the ground floors of many of these houses served as shops rather than being used for raising livestock, and some were even fitted with iron roller doors (*tiejuanmen*). Nevertheless, the street and houses still maintained a very Miao appearance, and the overall impression was that of an ancient town. We walked mostly in silence. I was immersed in the tranquility of walking through a seemingly ancient village, enjoying the starlight, the occasional smells of Miao cooking escaping through shuttered windows, the sound of our footsteps on the earthy and sandy road, and the occasional greetings in Miao between my host and other villagers. The main street was quite short and we soon came to the end of it, once again facing the river, a second and larger bridge, and the scattered lights of houses decorating the mountainside across the river from us.

We crossed the river again and immediately left the main road to begin climbing the zigzag earth and stone path up the mountain. Passing several houses, as well as construction sites for new houses, we arrived at the house of Zha. After a warm welcome,

we were led up a narrow staircase to the house's central patio. My host introduced me to the Zha family, giving them some pork she had bought that morning in the market as a gift, and they chatted happily and animatedly in Miao. Despite my understanding no Miao, their smiles told me that my presence was sincerely welcomed. Bathed in the dim glow of the solitary bulb that lit the patio, listening to the musical sounds of Miao (the tone of which to me seemed more expressive than Mandarin), which echoed slightly around the nearby valley, and amusing myself by examining the portraits of singers and TV stars posted on the surrounding wooden walls, I felt strangely relaxed. One of the older women, who like many other women in the village wrapped her long hair and the back of her head in a towel, took my arm, pointed to a door leading off one end of the patio, and gesturing for me to enter.

Entering this room from the dimly lit patio, my eyes were momentarily forced to narrow by the dazzlingly bright light in one corner of the room. It took me a while to realize that the light source was a television. Besides the television the room was almost empty, containing only some dried yams heaped on the ground, a few low wooden stools, and a cardboard box. The television, despite being a regular model rather than something fancy, looked quite magnificent compared to its surroundings. Many residents of Xijiang possessed televisions, but it was still interesting to see a television sitting in the center of a Miao living room, surrounded only by dried yam, strings of dried chilies, and dried corn. I meant to ask them if the television had been brought back by a family member working in the city, but before I had the chance, the signal became unstable and the screen went snowy. They asked if I would like to watch a VCD instead and then proudly explained that the television and the VCD machine (which was carefully stored in the cardboard

box in one corner of the room) had both been brought back by their children working in Guangdong. It was only my second day in Xijiang and I had already heard three similar stories.⁷ I was surprised by the numbers of migrant laborers Xijiang exported, and by the numbers of television sets and VCD machines these workers brought back.

The arrival of these televisions had created a surge of information regarding urban life, almost always richer than life in their village. Although the impoverished and remote rural areas are no longer, if indeed they ever were, “isolated” from the more developed and wealthy urban areas, televisions remain important to villagers as windows on the external world. Whereas a small portion of television programs, for example CCTV’s Agriculture Channel (CCTV Channel Seven),⁸ are produced specifically for peasants, most programs are produced by and for urban people. Additionally, most television advertising targeted the consumption-capable urban residents. Watching these programs gave rural people an opportunity to learn about urban life and market values, and the exposure was more frequent than what they gleaned through the annual visits of relatives working in cities.

The effects of migrant laborers’ purchases of televisions reminded me again of the state’s policy of “Engineering Project of Radio and Television for Every Village (*Cun Cun Tong Guangbo Dianshi Gongcheng*)”. The policy, as a critical initiative for enriching the impoverished rural villages, based on the slogan “leave poverty behind, get rich, and rush towards a comfortable life (*tuopin zhifu benxiaokang*),” focuses on

⁷ In two of the three cases, the persons who brought back the television had returned to Xijiang to live with their parents because they could not adapt to life in Guangdong.

⁸ In addition to Agriculture, Channel Seven of CCTV also broadcasts children programs and military programs. It is actually called “The Channel of Children, Military and Agriculture (shao’er, junshi, nongye)”. Another interesting phenomenon is: due to technical and budgetary issues, the television channels transmitted via satellite, the only channels available in most impoverished rural areas, often did not cover agriculture channels. Consequently, these peasant-targeted channels are often not available to these poorest peasants.

educating the massive rural population about specific market mindsets by using mass media.⁹ As Louisa Schein succinctly explained:

“... the state, hoping to relieve its social welfare burden in impoverished rural areas, has turned to striving for the constitution of a desiring media audience whose eventual market activity, it is hoped, can be spurred by a recognition of the disparity between actual material lives and the consumption riches viewed on television”.

Formally named an “engineering project” (*gongcheng*), the policy has been carried out through bringing electricity to remote villages, setting up satellite dishes and stations, and deploying state employees to manage these stations and maintain broadcasting services in remote areas. However, the policy would be ineffective without the villagers buying television sets, paying for electricity, and subscribing to the cable service providers that transmit signals from the satellite stations to their homes. I would like to revisit Louisa Lim’s words: “The countryside is moving to the city, while the city is encroaching on the countryside”. This description contains two crucial ideas: unbalanced power relations between the city and the countryside, with the term *encroaching* making the countryside vulnerable to the city, and an active countryside striving to transform itself. In other words, the transformation of the countryside results not just from the actions of urban people but also from the efforts of the rural population, including the critical contribution of migrant laborers.

⁹ The Cun Cun Tong policy is usually promoted and referred to as “a project for enrichment (Zhifu Gongcheng)”. However, to inspire villages about the benefits of a market mindset and the possibilities for getting rich is certainly not the only goal of the policy. Equally important it is a means of bringing the voices of the state and local governments to every rural resident (and a much more efficient substitute for the old loud speaker and local cadres). This is likely why the policy is also referred to as “a project for people’s minds (*Minxin Gongcheng*).”

In a way, the state is wrong in assuming that the rural population lacked a market mindset and thus needed to be educated to become market savvy. The behaviors of migrant laborers, as demonstrated in the above example involving the creation of a rural television audience, prove that villagers took the initiative in joining newly established urban markets. Mass media encouraged further market-related behaviors, desires, and know-how (Schein 2001). Migrant laborers alone were unable to change the awkward economic conditions and deep-rooted values of their rural homes, but were indispensable in changing both physical environment of rural areas and in introducing villagers to new ideas and values, including their self-positioning and awareness of the world out there.

Migrant Laborers as Performers of Urban Styles

Migrant laborers are critical actors in the changes occurring in the Chinese countryside, with the changes they have wrought being both concrete and phenomenal. Compared to television programs that mold thinking, planning, and expectations, the money migrant laborers remit home simply provides villagers with purchasing power. Things that they previously did not dare to wish for, from sweets or bicycles for children, through to televisions, VCD players, motorcycles, cars, and houses, have become attainable.

Although markets have always existed in the countryside, even in the most impoverished places, traditionally trading was limited to exchanges between villages and nearby market towns - i.e. selling agricultural produce and handicrafts to markets in nearby towns and buying goods from these markets to sell to fellow villagers. Higher-priced goods gradually arrive as the village becomes richer. In comparison, migrant laborers bring goods back to the village in a sudden and dramatic manner that crosses large spatial and

economic distances: when visiting home, migrant laborers unpack the huge bags they have carried back with them and carefully bring out boxes of colorfully packaged candy with the words “specialty of Shanghai” (*Shanghai techan*) carried on each individual wrapper; the children of workers who have just returned from the city may suddenly be seen proudly riding brand new bicycles around the neighborhood; former acquaintances may be surprised by the almost unrecognizable outfits worn by the individuals they see alighting from the city buses, outfits including new fashions bought in Beijing markets, or second-hand Nike sneakers gifted by an employer; small items commonplace in the cities – such as pens or flash lights – might be casually produced by recent returnees (Re: Ramos-Zayas 2007). The effects are phenomenal because, through their mobility, migrant laborers overcome physical and economic distance and directly bring the big cities (or at least parts of them) to their homes. These phenomenal effects then generate increased power to continue the pursuit of wealth and urban life. Yan Hairong (2003a) calls this power “power for Development” and offers another example similar to those presented above. Yan observed that “the spectacle of migrants driving back from Beijing to Wuwei County for the lunar New Year in over a hundred private cars provides a stunning materialization of this power [of Development] (501).”

Motivated by the desire to escape the hard physical labor of working on the land, rural villagers are moving in large numbers to the cities. Together, they are bringing back the capital and ideas necessary for the development and urbanization of rural villages. Improved material comforts are being achieved and industrialization and urbanization are being witnessed in the countryside throughout China. However, whether the wealth gap between the city and countryside will reduce and the yearning for a better urban life will

diminish remains an interesting question. After all, the migrants from the countryside serve as a critical labor force for the accelerated urban and economic development of cities and mega-cities. Just like the more respected and better treated urban elite (including business professionals, intellectuals and state officials), migrant laborers contribute to the impressive changes in urban landscape, quality of life, and wealth. While some migrant laborers (though not all of them) successfully bring home long-expected improvements in quality of life, they probably contribute still bigger improvements to cities and their inhabitants. Since migrant laborers undoubtedly bring a bit of the city back to their rural homes, precisely how the dynamic relationship between the urban and rural will unfold remains to be seen.

Bringing the Rural to the Urban

“Peasants” in the City¹⁰

Migrant laborers not only contribute to the development of the countryside but also to urban transformation. Unlike goods (Chapter 3) and images (Chapter 4), which typically travel exclusively in one direction, i.e. to the countryside, migrant laborers come and go between cities and villages. After years of working in cities, they are no longer as mobile or rural as their name suggests. Many migrant laborers are de facto city residents,

¹⁰ Chapter 10 of *Dangdai Zhongguo Shehui Liudong (Social Mobility in Contemporary China)* (Lu Xueyi 2004) contained a useful section on the differentiation between nongmingong (peasant-workers) and liudong renkou (floating population) – not all peasant-workers are part of the floating population, and not all those peasants who leave home go to big cities. In fact, the majority of peasant-workers stayed near their homes to do non-agricultural work such as factory jobs (so called “leaving land without leaving home (*litubulixiang*)”).

although they may move among cities, retain their *laojia* (native homes) back in the village, and remain peasants according to the household registration system. Solinger (1999) labeled migrant laborers “unrooted noncitizens” to describe their quandary in loosing their life in the countryside while remaining undocumented urban residents. Migrant laborers live in cities, literally help build cities, and become indispensable to urban life through providing various services, including babysitting, housekeeping, milk and water delivery, and so on. Moreover, their children increasingly frequently grow up in cities, and city residents (i.e., those with legal *hukou*) are increasingly accustomed to their presence within the cityscape. However, without urban *hukou*, their interests are neglected by urban governments and they themselves are rejected by the urban communities in which they live. Lacking urban *hukou*, migrant laborers are clearly not considered urban insiders (or *chengliren*). The persistence of the household registration system and related government practices has duplicated and transplanted the dichotomized urban-rural (worker-peasant) hierarchy within cities. Urban-rural inequality has transformed into urban inequality, and migrant laborers – lacking the access to education and healthcare, as well as the legal status associated with an urban *hukou* – have become an urban underclass. The presence of migrant laborers contributes not only to changing the urban landscape, but also to transforming the urban social strata.

Modern metropolises are cities of migrants. These migrants, professionals and laborers alike, are vital to metropolitan development. On every construction site, whether for an ordinary residential complex or a major new city landmark, whether invested by a local real estate developer or the product of an internationally renowned architect, migrant laborers provide the majority of the workers required to do the actual building.

While *zhuangxiu* (renovation) has become an urban fashion and a critical mark of personal wealth, migrant laborers are the ones who make this renovation a reality. Without these migrant workers, the cities would have far fewer skyscrapers, city landmarks, and newly renovated homes. Besides providing construction workers, migrant laborers also provide the cleaners, housekeepers, baby sitters, maids, and sales clerks that big cities require to function. They greatly facilitate the operations of cities and make urban living comfortable. Migrant laborers take the lowliest paid and arduous jobs that urban residents refuse. As janitors and maids, migrant laborers toil to deal with office and domestic waste and clean up working and living spaces. For upwards of just USD 40 a month, urban families can hire migrant women as maids and baby sitters, as caretakers for disabled elderly family members. In the famous Xiushui market, which sold silk products, souvenirs, and cheap knockoffs to both foreign tourists and Beijing residents, many of the stall owners and almost all of the sales people were migrants. Migrant laborers also worked as waitress and waiters in restaurants and even high-end hotels. Many of the street vendors of illegal CDs, VCDs and DVDs, crucial to the entertainment of the urban white collar class and foreign residents, were also migrants. Much of the prosperity, development and comfort available in Chinese metropolises since the late 1990s is based not only on a strengthened national economy and foreign investment, but also on millions of migrants from the countryside who are willing to work hard for relatively little remuneration.

The cities that migrant laborers build ironically (but not surprisingly) do not welcome them. The more migrant laborers work in a city and the more developed that city, the more embarrassing their personal poverty becomes, and the more difficult it is

for them to achieve upward mobility. Karl Marx's argument regarding surplus labor and exploitation (1976) applies perfectly to the experience of migrant laborers in cities, and the urban-rural inequality underpinned by the household registration system unfolds in cities as a newly formulated class relation.

Migrant Laborers as Representatives of the Countryside

In cities, migrant laborers are taken for granted as representatives of rural China and the peasantry. In migrant laborers's appearance, body language, dialects, habits, and so on, urban people see "villages", "the countryside", and "peasants". The low social status of migrant laborers in cities strengthens negative stereotypes of rural places and people (for example, poverty and vulgarity). Migrant laborers are consumed by urban residents as raw materials for imagining an impoverished rural China. Urban residents rely heavily on imagination in perceiving migrants, since in fact the majority of urban residents know and care little about the lives and backgrounds of this group. However, migrant laborers provide convenient objects for urban people forming stereotypes regarding villages and the peasantry, and thus help consolidate urban identity.

At Dabeyao bus station, a major transit hub in Beijing, many migrant laborers, men and women alike, were scattered beneath the overpass of the third ring road waiting for buses to either take them to work or "home" to their suburban migrant "villages". All of them wore similarly drab clothes and blank facial expressions. Some stood and others squatted. They seldom talked to each other and exhibited little impatience with waiting, even though it could take them over 30 minutes simply to get on a jam-packed bus. It was hard to tell where they were from, potentially any province or region of China.

Statistics show that migrant laborers represent the “educated” group among the rural population; that is, their education is above the rural population average (Lu Xueyi 2004, 311). However, their superior status within the context of their own villages is difficult to discern from the embarrassed, frightened, and worn out appearances and expressions with which they face urban residents. In the eyes of urban people, the particulars of the pasts of migrant laborers are invisible, and for the most part so too are their private lives in Beijing. What remains are impressions obtained from migrant laborers at work and in urban public spaces, i.e, streets, buses, and so on. “They must be poor to be willing to leave their family and children at home and agree to take even menial jobs in the city, and they must lack education and culture (*suzhi, wenhua*) to be so quiet and wear such outdated, funny and threadbare clothes,” was how Shifang perceived migrant laborers. Similar conclusions drawn by numerous other urban residents undoubtedly affect urban perceptions of the countryside, and at least confirms the superiority of the city over the countryside.

As representatives of the countryside and the peasantry, some of the identities of migrant laborers are erased, while others are emphasized. Migrant laborers are not a homogenous group. They are from different places and have different educational and personal experiences. They also differ in age and gender. For example, the female migrant workers interviewed by Yan Hairong (2003b) who maintained they would rather die than return home, were mostly younger rural women with better education. In Anthropologist Li Zhang’s ethnographic study (2001), those who challenged state control and municipal administration were mostly wealthier migrant merchants. In my study, the key group of migrant laborer informants in Beijing was women in their thirties who

worked as domestic helpers, with husbands who had accompanied them to the city to work in construction. In contrast, in Xi'an, my migrant laborer informants were mostly young women in their late teens and early twenties with limited education, and who were working as waitresses and salesgirls, a similar demographic to that surveyed by Yan Hairong.

Contrasting with the disregard for the differences among migrant laborers, urban residents stress the peasant identity of migrant laborers (even when some migrants, particularly younger ones, have never worked on the farm). This is evident in the naming of these migrant laborers. The official name used by the state and the mass media is *nonmingong*, literally peasant-worker. Moreover, Beijing residents often belittle migrant laborers by referring to them simply as *nongmin*.

The Urban Lower Class

“Documented” urban residents (i.e. those with urban hukou) also include various poor, unemployed, or powerless groups, with little disposable income or living on the poverty line.¹¹ Such groups cannot afford to invest in house renovation projects, purchase new apartments in the urban high-rise buildings built by migrant laborers, or hire baby sitters or maids. This poor urban population cannot enjoy the material comfort made possible by migrant laborers, and in fact migrant laborers are potential competitors in the job market. Nevertheless, without migrant laborers, the deteriorating lifestyle of the urban poor, the

¹¹ Chen Yingfang argues that the urban lower class (or *chengshi Xiaceng*) includes four groups: 1. the original urban underclass, comprising low-income laborers, elders without social welfare, and the seriously ill and disabled; 2. the newly emerged urban poor, including laid-off workers, recently returned “educated youth (*zhiqing*)”, retirees, and criminals; 3. peasants who were forced to become “unemployed” after losing their farmland to the state or private developers; and 4. migrant laborers living in the city.

result of unemployment, state requisition of land and housing, massive inflation in urban areas, and growing urban class differences, would be even worse. The relationship between the poor urban population and migrant laborers is interesting and revealing.

Cui'an, in her first year as a migrant laborer in Beijing, earned an average of RMB 2000 per month. Holding four to five part time jobs, Cui'an was constantly overworked. However, her income was much higher than Shifang, my Beijing hutong family informant who worked as a senior staff member in a hotel housekeeping department and made roughly RMB 1000 per month. In fact, Cui'an's monthly income sometimes reached as high as RMB 3000, equal to the average income of a fresh college graduate in Beijing. Although Cui'an was fortunate enough to enjoy a high income relative to other migrant laborers, some of whom made only RMB 300 per month, instances abound of migrant laborers whose earning power equal or exceed urban working class residents. The material advantage enjoyed by the urban poor versus migrant laborers derives not from their incomes but from the welfare guaranteed by their urban hukou: including state-subsidized education and healthcare and inherited or work-unit assigned houses. Notably however, as social welfare was often attached to state-assigned jobs, families of laid-off workers in cities often suffer not just loss of income but also loss of access to welfare benefits.

The poor urban population has little idea of the incomes of migrant laborers, and nor do they know much about the everyday lives lived by migrant laborers in cities. In fact, the poor urban population has little direct contact with migrant laborers, meaning their impressions of migrant laborers are usually mass-mediated. One evening as we chatted in her courtyard house, Shifang worried that she might lose her job after the hotel

where she worked underwent reorganization by foreign investors attempting to solve its financial problems. To compound her worries, there was also the possibility of losing her house to a new urban redevelopment project, the Liulichang Cultural Industrial Park project. Since her dilapidated house was right in the heart of the area earmarked for redevelopment, Shifang and her family faced a real possibility of being forced to move to a suburban area.¹² Whatever compensation the government provided would not be enough to allow them to remain in the neighborhood where her family members had been born, grown up, lived and worked. I suggested that she, with all her experience of working at a housekeeping department, would be highly sought after as a domestic helper for private households. She looked completely lost at my suggestion. This option seemed quite outside her realm of experience and I realized that she had little idea that many people in Beijing were making respectable money as domestic helpers.

When I said “nongmingong,” she confirmed with me that I was talking about those “peasants who came to the city hoping to make some money (*dao chengli lai, xiang zhenqian de nongmin*).” She had never known a migrant laborer personally and, to my surprise, could not recall encountering any either at work or in her neighborhood. Most of her impressions of migrant laborers were derived from news reports, particularly the regular phenomena of tens of thousands of migrant laborers jostling to board trains home before the Chinese New Year. Shifang’s impressions of migrant laborers seemed dominated by stereotypes of migrant laborers as potential criminals and sources of social disorder.

Members of the urban working class such as Shifang assume that migrant laborers are an underclass occupying an even lower social position than themselves. Even though

¹² However, the redevelopment project of Liulichang had not yet been activated as of the summer of 2006.

migrant laborers typically work hard and sometimes earn more than established urban residents (in other words, they do not truly fit the two frequently cited criteria of underclass membership, namely “exclusion from the labor force” and being “the poorest members of a society”), they are still taken for granted as the lowest class in the city based on the widely-circulated impression that they are desperately poor peasants and a source of social disorder.

Perceived as the lowest urban social class, migrant laborers become a crucial reference for other disadvantaged urban groups. The presence of migrant laborers in cities gave face (*mianzi*) to other poor urban residents, who were able to position themselves above migrant laborers in the urban social order, namely as respectable residents of the internationalizing capital. Migrant laborers thus are building blocks of identity for all urban residents, poor and rich alike. Despite suffering much undeserved discrimination in cities, many migrant laborers still chose to stay; moreover, their neighbors and children often flock to the cities to join them. One reason for the strong determination of migrant laborers to come to the city is that, regardless of how badly they are treated there, they still gained a higher social status than those who remained back in the village as peasants. Through the mediation of migrant laborers, a hierarchy is thus created among the lower orders of Chinese society – specifically a hierarchy among the urban poor, migrant laborers, and poor rural peasants.

From Rural Peasants to Urban Insiders (Chengliren)

Migrant laborers flock to urban areas not to build global cities but in response to the relative deterioration of economic conditions in their villages. Still, without the urgent and massive demands associated with urban development, the phenomenon of hundreds of millions of peasants coming to the cities to work would not occur. The emergence of migrant laborers and world cities thus are two complementary processes. Migrant laborers do not move to cities to mediate emerging urban social stratification or urban-rural differences, but their moving to cities has this effect. This study examines whether the urban-rural dichotomy is fluid to the point where migrant laborers have the possibility of becoming *chengliren*, urban insiders, or established urban residents. While the answer to this question remains uncertain, the issue is central to China's changing social organization, urban-rural dichotomy, class formation, and developing economic system. The following presents and analyzes ethnographic materials dealing with the lives of migrant laborers in Beijing and Xi'an, in an attempt to examine the possibilities for migrant laborers to transcend urban-rural dichotomies, changing their identity from rural peasants to urban peasants and finally urban insiders. The following relies heavily on related research data regarding migrant laborers in Xi'an because the comparison between migrant laborers in Xi'an and Beijing offers interesting insights into the nature of the urban-rural dichotomy. Based on these research experiences, this study argues that Beijing is more exclusive to migrant laborers – and disadvantaged outsiders in general – than is Xi'an; in Beijing *chengliren* (urban insider) is a more important identity and thus one that is harder to obtain. Nevertheless, the urban-rural dichotomy in Beijing remains somewhat fluid.

Chengliren (urban insider), the identity that migrant laborers are often confronted with and denied, is not just a badge of honor or identity, but also represents access to crucial economic benefits. Strictly speaking, chengliren are those holding urban hukou, where the hukou is primarily a mechanism for the distribution of limited social welfare. Consequently, richer outsiders – including business elite, successful artists and celebrated intellectuals – are seldom treated as outsiders, and nor are they eager to obtain a local urban hukou. Since their lifestyle exceeds what an official hukou could provide for, their actual possession of such a hukou becomes inconsequential. For example, for wealthy urban residents who raise a second child despite the one-child policy, their second child will not be granted an urban hukou and associated social welfare, a putative mechanism that demonstrates the economic value of the hukou, as well as indicating that raising a second child is a significant show of wealth.

Complaints about *Beipiao* provide another example of the economic value of urban hukou. *Beipiao*, literally Beijing Wonderer, is a term first used by China Youth Daily (*Zhongguo Qingnian Bao*) in 1999 to describe young artists without Beijing hukou who came to Beijing to establish themselves and capitalize on the city's well developed art markets and resources.¹³ Since then, the term has been popularly applied to describe anybody, whether white collar workers, college graduates, skilled workers, laborers, and so on, who works in Beijing without a Beijing hukou. Typically, “Beipiao” are not-yet-successful youth with a certain level of education or professional skills. Living away from home, they are deprived of both the advantages of a legal hukou and the support of the familial and social networks available in their home towns. Beipiao

¹³ Re: http://big5.china.com.cn/book/zhuanli/qkjc/txt/2006-09/06/content_7137469.htm.

typically complain that despite working and paying taxes like legal residents of Beijing, the lack of a Beijing hukou places them at an unfair disadvantage in terms of healthcare, education, employment, housing and pensions. For example, urban teenagers can enter college with much lower scores than those without an urban hukou. Moreover, “Economically Affordable Housing” in Beijing, available at a discount of 40 to 50% of the regular price, can only be taken up by those on limited incomes and with Beijing Hukou.¹⁴ No matter how long Beipiao work in Beijing or how much they contribute to the city (whether through taxes or other means), without hukou they remained ineligible for pensions and other social welfare in Beijing. I argue that the sense of exclusion felt by outsiders – both migrant laborers and Beipiao – is a feature of metropolises. In smaller and less prosperous second tier cities such as Xi’an, insider status is less important than in Beijing. The intensity with which urban insiders guard their identity is related to the degree of development of the city, and particularly to the resources the city controls.

Xi’an, as a major city in western China, also hosts hundreds of thousands of migrant laborers. Many of these migrant laborers are easily distinguished, for example the new arrivals and the unemployed who gather at the Wenyi Road Labor Market (*laowu shichang*) or on sidewalks around the city gates, many with small cardboard signs placed in front of them to indicate whether they are a carpenter, mover, builder, electrician, cook, and so on. However, many others blend successfully into the city. As in Beijing, the formal term used by the Xi’an mass media and state officials to refer to migrant laborers is “peasant-worker (*nongmingong*)”. Nevertheless, in casual contexts migrant laborers

¹⁴ Economically Affordable Housing is usually built by commercial housing developers receiving tax rebates from government for doing so. The prices of affordable houses are fixed by the government. Though affordable housing has existed since the 1990s, the first formal administrative measures relating to the system were issued on May 13, 2004 (re: <http://www.cin.gov.cn/default.htm>).

are often referred to simply as “temporary manual workers (*lai dagongde*)”.¹⁵ The lesser emphasis on their peasant identity (e.g., *nongmin*) loosens the ties between these migrant laborers and their rural hometowns and increases the possibility for them to become legitimate Xi’an residents.

Very early in my acquaintance with Ningning, Qing, and Ma Lan – all girls in their early twenties or late teens who had come from rural Shaanxi to work in Xi’an, I noted with surprise that they seldom appeared intimidated by their host city, contrasting with what I had observed of migrant laborers in Beijing. Ningning was a waitress in a restaurant in a four-star hotel, Qing worked as a waitress in a restaurant on a university campus, and Ma Lan was an employee of an upscale dry clean chain store. Being young and inexperienced, and with limited skills, they had all suffered unpleasant, sometimes humiliating, interpersonal experiences. Given their meager income, roughly RMB 300 to 500 per month, they were far from able to afford themselves a comfortable city life. Nevertheless, they seemed to find their lives in Xi’an quite agreeable. Unless one looked carefully and noted their overworked, swollen, and chapped hands, it was difficult to tell them from other girls of the same age, whether native Xi’aners or college students from elsewhere. Unlike the dour and tense migrant laborers I encountered in Beijing, these young hard-working girls enjoyed living in Xi’an. In their free time, they enjoyed hanging out on the crowded main streets, and they did not feel awkward or self-conscious about spending time in public spaces such as shopping centers and restaurants. They did not see themselves as country bumpkins temporarily in the city, and were not worried

¹⁵ According to a news report, in August 2006, the government of Yanta, a district of Xi’an, decided to drop the term *nongmingong* in favor of “New Urban Citizens (*xin shimin*)” in official documents. This change in terminology marked a policy change, under which migrant laborers would start to enjoy the same welfare as ordinary citizens, despite not having urban *hukou*.
<http://www.longhoo.net/big5/longhoo/news2004/china/userobject1ai540665.html>

about being taken as such. They were more ambitious and confident than the older migrants I encountered in Beijing. Notably, during our first encounter, I was struck by the fact that Ma Lan, then a receptionist at a dry cleaning store, was studying English. I quickly made an effort to get to know her. She told me that she was learning (*zixue*, literally, self-learning) English because she believed that by improving her English she would be able to find better and more interesting work. She did not want to leave Xi'an, whether to return home or to go to some other more prosperous city, such as Guangzhou, Shanghai, or Beijing.¹⁶ This group of young migrants had dreams of building a future in cities, and returning home was not an option. Young migrants like Ningning, Qing, and Ma Lan enjoyed making friends of various backgrounds, and were not at all shy in doing so. In fact, Ningning and Qing became my key informants after their curiosity about me led them to initiate conversation with me. Seeing themselves as newcomers to Xi'an rather than outsiders, they were receptive to their new urban environment and not at all intimidated by it.

Certain characteristics shared by these migrant girls undoubtedly contributed to their relaxed attitudes towards life in Xi'an. Their being young and natives of Shaanxi were two likely factors. In their early twenties and late teens, these girls grew up during the economic Reform Era, giving them different perspectives regarding money and material comfort to their elders who had grown up during Mao's planned economy era. Furthermore, they were unmarried and therefore had relatively light family burdens, and certainly no children to look after. Like youth everywhere, they were naïve and fearless

¹⁶ According to the conversation of the author with Ma Lan on March 13 2001. At that time, Ma Lan had just returned from Guangzhou, where she worked as a salesperson for a direct-selling company, losing RMB 3000 to 4000, a huge sum for her, as a result of the experience. She said that Guangzhou was not a suitable place for her and she no longer wished to move to a coastal metropolis, preferring to remain in a medium sized city like Xi'an.

in pursuing their dream. Additionally, as natives of Shaanxi, it was reasonable for them to identify with Xi'an as their broadly defined "home". It was not too difficult for them to find *laoxiang*, people from their native villages or districts, in Xi'an and their home dialects were already similar to that spoken by Xi'aners.

Besides these personal factors though, the character of the city itself was also critical in making Xi'an a more agreeable place for migrant laborers. As a city, Xi'an is much more inclusive than Beijing. Despite being one of the oldest cities in the world, in the decades before the 1970s, Xi'an has been little more than a small or medium size city with a glorious but largely forgotten history. Most current Xi'an residents are not native Xi'aners, but rather moved to the city during the 1950s or later. One major group of immigrants to Xi'an comprised refugees of famine from Henan province. The most recent waves of immigration occurred during the Great Chinese Famine (or the Three Years of Natural Disasters, *Sannian Ziran Zaihai*) at the end of the 1950s. These refugees fled from Henan along the railway to adjacent Shaanxi province, and many settled in Xi'an along the north side of the railway, being named "Daobei Ren (literally, north-railway people)". Another group of well established newcomers are the professionals sent to Xi'an in the mid 1950s as part of the policy of "Supporting the Great Northwest (*Zhiyuan Da Xibei*)", in which key educational, research, and military institutions were relocated from coastal cities to northwestern provinces.¹⁷

Until Cao Yi invited me to her home I had passed Balicun (Bali Village), a neighborhood off Chang'an Road (the main street in the southern suburb of Xi'an), almost daily without noticing its unique character versus the rest of the city. I later

¹⁷ Another example of collective migration is the relocation of skilled textile workers from state factories in Shanghai to newly established textile factories in the eastern suburbs of Xi'an.

learned that Xi'an had many "ghettos" like this (known as "villages in the city (chengzhongcun)"), inhabited by poor former peasants and other outsiders. Cao Yi was a college graduate working in Xi'an. She was a calm and quiet person, a typical "educated youth (*wenyi qingnian*, literally young adult of culture and arts)" – i.e., young people with a love for arts, philosophy, and literature – according to the classification used by Xi'aners.¹⁸ To reach her home I followed her through a white gate labeled "Bali Dong Cun (Bali Eastern Village)", set across a narrow opening between buildings facing Chang'an road. When we passed through the entrance tunnel, a narrow passage between two buildings that was flanked by vendors selling fruits and vegetables, I instantly found myself in a different world. We walked quickly past aggressive fruit sellers, reaching a series of busy and winding passages hemmed in by odd multistory brick "courtyard houses". We kept encountering more fruit and vegetable vendors, either vigorously hawking their wares or squatting expressionlessly on the dusty ground. Construction workers threaded through the crowd pushing wheelbarrows loaded with bricks and cement. Their hasty passage only added to the dust in the air. The five story "courtyard houses" were built by simply piling bricks and cement on top of pre-existing old courtyard houses, and thus each building contained a small internal courtyard. Cheap and amateurish construction resulted in dangerously slanting walls and floors.

Taking a deep breath, I climbed up the rickety stairs with Cao Yi to her top floor room. It was a tiny room measuring about three square meters, and was easily filled by Cao Yi's bed and a few boxes of books. Although there were windows on two sides of the room, they were internal windows opening onto corridors used by other residents,

¹⁸ I suspect that the values of "educated youth" result from (related to) Xi'aners' dissatisfaction with a disappointing material environment. Despite lacking money, at least they can derive pleasure and a sense of accomplishment through acquainting themselves with arts, philosophy, or literature.

forcing Cao Yi to keep her curtains perpetually drawn. A sink with several faucets occupied one corridor, and was shared for washing and tooth brushing by all residents of that floor. Climbing another flight of stairs, Cao Yi brought me to the roof of the building, the location of two locked toilets, which were again shared by the residents of the building. The building had no shower or bathing facilities, and the residents would simply use public bathhouses when necessary. Cao Yi and I stood in lengthy silence by the low rooftop wall, surrounded by strings of laundry fluttering like flags in the breeze, gazed down at the courtyard and the alleys, watched people rush in and out, and listened to the hubbub of voices. The material condition of this courtyard house was undoubtedly bad, but as Cao Yi explained “it was very cheap and provided me with a sort of private space”. Her monthly rent was RMB 150, compared to the (already discounted) daily fee of RMB 90 I was paying at the dormitory for visiting students and scholars at the Xi’an Foreign Language Institute. Cao Yi explained that her landlords were former peasants who had lost their land to urbanization and state requisition. Meanwhile, the tenants included all kinds of people who needed a cheap place to stay, including unmarried college students living together, newly graduated white collar workers, vendors from nearby towns, and migrant laborers. One of the first things that impressed me about Cao Yi and Balicun was how a “wenyi qingnian” like herself seemed comfortable in the company of migrant laborers, something I had not observed in Beijing. Cao Yi described how she loved watching people from her rooftop: “here you see the lives of ordinary people (*shijingxiaomin*), rather than the lives of citizens (*shimin*) living in apartment buildings provided by work units (*danweilou*).”

As migrants and natives become increasingly similar, mutual social segregation or exclusion decreases. “Villages in the City,” as shown by the case of Balicun, exemplify the possibility of creating a shared community of natives (urbanized former peasants), white collar workers, and migrant laborers. Economic situation can be an important point of similarity between natives and migrants in this case: wealth differences between natives and migrants are smaller in Xi’an than in Beijing. Even though the residents of Villages in the City, such as that in Xi’an, have diverse backgrounds, they share being poor in common. As migrants continue to move to the city, the competition for job opportunities and social status intensifies. Beijing and other metropolises, as agglomerations of enormous national and international resources, opportunities, and people, exhibit especially intense competition. In contrast, small cities such as Xi’an have lower levels of overall economic development, and hence milder competition between natives and “newcomers”. Chengliren as an identity entailing material benefits is thus less important and distinct in Xi’an.

The comparison between migrants in Xi’an and Beijing shows that defining chengliren is an obsession peculiar to Beijing. Like all identities, chengliren identity emerges from encounters between distinct groups. In this case, chengliren, as an identity associated with material benefits, was produced in the context of the rapid economic development experienced by globalizing Beijing, and emerged from the encounters between established residents and migrants. The insistence of Beijingers on identifying chengliren, thus stubbornly differentiating insiders and outsiders, is a revealing window on the essence of Beijing, as a place of increasingly abundant resources and opportunities, fierce competition, and hence the production of a new social hierarchy and order.

Saskia Sassen defines global cities as global centers of finance, servicing and management, seeing such centers as having evolved from the globalization of economic activities, particularly the financial industry (Sassen 1991, 324). Although Beijing differs in many respects from the global cities Sassen is concerned with, namely 1980s New York, London, and Tokyo, it resembles them in being one of the central cities for managing global investment both into and out of China. Among Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen, the major cities in China most closely linked to the global market, Beijing attracts particular attention simply by virtue of being the political center: considering the powerful and even omnipresent nature of the Chinese central state, all investors recognize the importance of remaining close to the central government and officials in Beijing.

Investigating the day to day experiences of Beijing's migrant laborers, particularly their interactions with other residents, this study provides an ethnographic view of the informal workers who typically inhabit global cities. The experience of Beijing's migrant laborers reveals the mundane and unattractive facets of a supposedly splendid city. However, migrant laborers and their daily reality are genuine and crucial aspects of this global city. The focus on migrant laborers in Beijing confirms Sassen's argument that globalization, supposed to benefit urban residents, can easily produce inequalities (Sassen 1991). These inequalities, exemplified by the insistence on differentiating outsiders from *chengliren*, were so typical and so strongly established in the rapidly globalizing city that it seemed nearly impossible for an urban lower class such as migrant laborers to achieve upward mobility. I wondered if it would be ever possible for migrant laborers to comfortably fit into Beijing until I had an inspiring experience on a bus ride with Cui'an to Village Huai, where she lived in Beijing.

To go to Village Huai in the southwestern suburb of Beijing from my apartment in the northeastern corner of the city, Cui'an and I took three different buses, a journey lasting around two hours. Until reaching our final transit near the Military Museum (Junshibowuguan) subway station, Cui'an seemed shy as she sat among the other passengers, mostly working class Beijing residents. She barely spoke and kept her head low. However, while we waited at the Military Museum bus station she started to exchange brief greetings with other commuters in Anhui dialect. Clearly, there were significantly more migrant laborers among the commuters waiting at this station than at the previous stations. After boarding our last bus and starting to zigzag towards our destination, I found the numbers of Anhui migrants on board steadily increased, with native Beijingers gradually becoming a minority. The nods and silent smiles among the passengers gradually developed into loud conversations, giggles, and shouting. Before long, I was completely surrounded by the sound of Anhui dialect. A few of the commuters yelled at Cui'an and openly pointed at me with wide smiles. It was apparent that they were asking who I was, having already guessed correctly that I was not from Anhui and did not understand the dialect. Cui'an remained quiet, giving polite but short replies, and neither joining nor initiating conversations.

These Anhui commuters looked different from how they had appeared just a short time previously, and also different from migrant laborers I had encountered in other contexts in Beijing: they laughed, joked, slapped one another's shoulders, smiled slyly, spoke assertively, and their faces were highly expressive. They behaved like the masters of the bus: their volume was certainly too loud for an urban public space, but they were not behaving rudely or particularly excitedly; this was simply the way they talked back in

their villages. For a few moments, I thought that I was traveling by bus with Cui'an and her relatives and friends somewhere in Anhui. In contrast to the other outgoing Anhuinese, Cui'an's silence seemed inappropriate. I wondered if it was because of my presence or because she was relatively new in Beijing. Was it possible that these Anhui migrants saw the bus as their place, despite it being in Beijing, while Cui'an continued to feel a stranger to the city, even in the bus full of her *laoxiang* (people from her home provinces or villages)

At that particular time, that particular bus was transformed into a space belonging to both Beijing and Anhui. The experience of riding this bus demonstrated to me that migrant laborers not only have shelters and communities in Beijing, but also have public spaces where they felt comfortable being themselves. Even though they did not expect to spend their lives in Beijing, and nor did they have ambitious dreams of finding success there, they were still comfortable enough in the city to introduce to it some of their own style. Although migrant laborers, as the excluded lower class, lacked the means, power and desire to truly challenge the established distinction between themselves and *chengliren*, they still found ways to permeate this boundary between outsiders and insiders, and in very limited contexts were themselves insiders of the city.

Labor migration to cities and urban development are intertwined. Migrant laborers are essential for the construction and functioning of rapidly developing and internationalizing cities. Therefore, to understand what has happened in Chinese cities in general and Beijing in particular under the impacts of both global capital and the Chinese central state, I posit that we need to understand not only the glamorous world of the Central Business District (the CBD), transnational professionals, and local elite but also

the world of the essential lower class, i.e, the migrant laborers. It is necessary to ask what type of place Beijing is for migrant laborers, and, even more important, how these two very different urban communities interact. Examining “the Beijing of migrant laborers” makes it clear that the establishment of Beijing as a global city that aspires to obtain leading position in the international urban hierarchy, is shaped not only by transnational factors, but also by domestic ones, including the rural.

6

CONCLUSION**Summary**

This dissertation on Beijing has attempted to understand the transformation of both Beijing and China in response to the rapidly changing Chinese and international political and economic environment. Specifically, this study examined the disruptions and connections among people and place in late socialist China during a period of increasing integration with the global economy. Examining the dynamics among various social groups both within and beyond Beijing, I chose to focus on two aspects of daily life: consumption practices and the use of mass media. Consumption practices have been a critical domain for the negotiation of identity ever since the beginning of Reform China. The Dengist economic reform was an attempt to achieve a better life, promising freedom from material scarcity by developing a market economy and encouraging consumption. One notable belief that the Dengist Economic Reform created was that social power and position can be measured materially through the possession of certain goods. Examining and comparing consumption practices of various groups within and beyond Beijing, I emphasized the novelty of disposable income, and its importance in addressing the characteristics of “late socialist consumers.” Mass media was crucial for the making of communities of various geographic scales, and have been critical facilitators of the awareness of differences between people and places, fostering an image of cities as

centers of modernity and wealth. Based on ethnographic research, I argued that China has been undergoing a transitional period during the early 21st Century, transforming from an external-referencing Dengist Economic Reform and Opening-Up era to a new self-referencing era, featuring prosperity and global influence and epitomized by the staging of the Olympics. Starting from an interest in how globalization progresses on the local level, this ethnographic research argued that the process of globalization in China was characterized by the profound, if not determining, influence of China's late socialist state. Throughout the dissertation, I examined and attempted to demonstrate how the state is critical in facilitating social changes and influencing identity production. Regarding theories of globalization, this study proposed a focus on the "contact zone" of global and local communities, as well as of emerging social groups (an adaptation of Pratt's theoretical concept) in the city. This focus provided a perspective that transforms "homes" (such as Beijing for native Beijingers) into "frontiers" of global encounters, not only between global and local things and people, but also between differentiated local groups (such as the three key informant groups of Beijing examined in this dissertation). This study demonstrated that the making of and interaction among highly economically-differentiated social groups within a city provided a critical analytical lens for studying China's recent transformation. Among the three key informant groups examined, I found the migrant laborers to be the most interesting. Though socially and economically marginalized, migrant laborers were critical mediators of economic and socio-cultural differences both within cities and between places. I posited that migrant laborers were the ideal subjects for studies of China's transformation into a late socialist state with an early capitalist mode of production.

This dissertation makes three contributions to the current literature. First, it examines the evolution of Beijing from multiple perspectives – both within and beyond the city – and considers the city in the global, national and local contexts. Second, it presents ethnography on the situation of late socialist societies in the face of economic globalization. Third, it examines and documents China at a specific turning point – the eve of the new Olympics era.

Specific concerns and future research directions which I identified through this ethnographic study include: 1) studying the new self-referencing Olympic Era, 2) analyzing specific urban districts as contact zones of economic globalization to address the relationship between emerging social groups and the establishment of a world city, 3) continuing to theorize regarding the roles of migrant laborers in social transformation during the late socialist and early capitalist periods in China, and 4) conducting field research through focusing on field sites that are not defined by geographic or administrative boundaries.

Key Issues and Developing Thoughts

The following discusses a few key arguments, findings and developing thoughts addressed in this dissertation: the importance of social differentiations, the multiplication of space in Beijing and contact zones, migrant laborers as mediators among people and places, as well as mass media studies and anthropological field sites.

The Importance of Social Differentiations

Soon after starting my fieldwork, I learned that my biggest challenge – and a general concern affecting all China-focused anthropology – was my research assumption that took “Beijingers” as a single homogenous subject group, without paying sufficient attention to internal heterogeneity. I was well aware that the Chinese are not a homogenous group. However, it is challenging to consider differences among Chinese in ethnographic research and even more challenging to focus on internal social differences. The difficulty does not arise in dividing up Chinese according to place of birth or residence, gender, income, property ownership, occupation, age or ethnic groups; rather, the challenge arises in how to study multiple groups without losing control of the research scope, especially during a period of rapid social stratification and restructuring as well as unprecedented increases in travel. This study found that social differentiations in Beijing resulted not simply from birth-place identity, age, generation, gender, income, or property ownership, but rather from the combination of these factors in a highly specific political and economic context, namely the encounter of late socialist governmentality and global market expansion.

This ethnographic study of Beijing focused on urban social differentiation and the interaction among multiple groups to demonstrate two points. First, Beijing has become a dynamic city characterized by unprecedented social differences and I wanted to present the city from a more encompassing perspective. Without contrasting the lives of and the interaction and isolation among the disparate groups inhabiting the city, it is impossible to maintain an accurate perspective on the rapidly changing capital. Second, the emerging social differentiation reflects critical changes beyond the city itself, namely national and

global changes, which themselves have important local implications. For the second reason, I believe that research on urban social differentiation in Beijing concerns not only anthropologists interested in Beijing or urban places, but also those interested in China and in global political and economic changes.

Focusing on social differentiations, this study examines not merely the divisions within Beijing society, but more importantly how that differentiated society is organized and develops its own unique culture; in other words, this dissertation examines the *making* and *remaking* of Beijing. Beijing is, after all, considered to possess its own unique culture. When we discuss Beijing culture, it is necessary to further clarify what groups and images we have in mind. Is it the courtyard house families and elders exercising around the Temple of Heaven at daybreak, the bicycle riding workers or low-ranking state employees in blue uniforms, or the affluent urban dwellers living, working and shopping in a bustling modern metropolis? What is the architecture that best represents Beijing: Is it the Forbidden City, the monuments of the proletarian revolution, the skyscrapers designed by world-renowned architects and housing headquarters of multi-national companies, or the Bird's Nest (the National Stadium), the Water Cube (the National Aquatics Center) and other Olympic structures? Why do certain people and lifestyles stand out at particular times for specific spectators? Chapter 5, on the role of migrant laborers in Beijing, represents an initial attempt to address the relationships among various groups of Beijing residents and between Beijing and other places in China.

Multiplication of Space in Beijing and Contact Zones

This dissertation examined Beijing using multiple spatial and temporal frames. Beijing is examined not only as a major metropolis in China, and the national capital, but also as an increasingly important global urban center. Beijing is a place that was late to join the global economy but is a leader in combining a market economy with a communist bureaucracy. This dissertation addressed the multiplication and fragmentation of spatial and temporal frames to argue how Beijing is simultaneously a global space for business professionals, a work space for migrant laborers and a local home and national center for hutong residents. The differentiated perceptions of the city reveal that various social groups lived in different reference communities and space, which is a key characteristic that should be examined in relation to the transformation of cities with increasing global influence and in studying localized process of globalization.

This dissertation proposes adapting the concept of contact zone (Pratt 1992) to examine the encounters among these differentiated urban groups and the spaces where these encounters happened. This approach offers the possibility of examining the encounters among different parties from multiple perspectives involved.

Migrant Laborers as Mediators among People and Places

As an internationalized capital city, Beijing is a place characterized by the agglomeration of people, capital and information. Migrant laborers are one group flowing into the city. Focusing on migrant laborers offers a means of capturing and making contrasts among the dynamics of rural and urban transformations and among different groups within a city. Although migrant laborers are an economically and socially marginalized group, this

study argued that, collectively, they are critical mediators of the creation of new social hierarchies in cities and of growing social discrepancies between places.

For future investigations on migrant laborers as mediators among people and places, I found the idea of “space of flows” of Manuel Castells inspiring and interesting. Manuel Castells addressed the transformation of urban spaces under the revolutionary impact of information technology (1989), and posited a shift in focus from “space of places” to a new “space of flows.”

“The space of flows is made of bits and pieces of places, connected by telecommunications, fast transportation, and information systems, and marked by symbols and spaces of intermediation (such as airports, international hotels, business centers, symbolized by de-localized architecture) (Castells 2000).”

A space of flows is thus a zone of highly mobile people and information. Regarding global cities, Castells argues that they are more than just major cities with high rankings in the global urban hierarchy. Rather, global cities are a new spatial form in which segments of numerous cities networked together to conduct global activities (re: Castells 2000, 697).

Castells’s research on informational technology and networked society focuses heavily on the most dynamic and professional segments of urban societies. When talking about *flows*, Castells refers information transmitted via telephone lines, optic fibers, or satellites and individuals traveling through rapid transportation corridors. These are the zones of urban life that appear farthest from the life of migrant laborers, who typically come from places that Castells refers to as “bypassed” by the global network. Such individuals have minimal experience of the virtual space of the Internet and no

experience of air transportation. In fact, they have little experience of *fast* means of moving: in cities, they either walked or took buses, even avoiding subway systems owing to their relatively higher cost; on their annual trips home, they used the cheaper slow trains that stopped at every station. Nevertheless, I found that, with some adjustments, the emphasis on flows, mobility, flexibility, and networking applies interestingly to the experiences of migrant laborers. Regular travel characterizes much of the urban experiences of migrant laborers, including long distance trips between their rural homes and host cities, the possibility of migrating to a different city after a few months or years, daily intra-city trips from their suburban dwellings to work sites, and their reliance on temporary housing in cities owing to their frequent changes of jobs and thus residences. “Networking” (admittedly in a meaning different from that used by Castells) is also important to migrant laborers in terms of finding jobs and settling in cities. For migrant laborers, networking is not about informational system, but rather about traditional, and in many cases family-based, interpersonal connections (i.e., *guanxi* in Chinese).

The informational city and informational society are not placeless; place still matters since organizations still occupy places and places remain an important source of experience for many people in many circumstances. The ‘flow’ of migrant laborers to cities is crucial in creating the zones (i.e. airports, hotels, office buildings, etc) that support the ‘flow’ Castells is concerned with. For the study of urbanization, global city, or globalization, I suggest that examining migrant laborers as flows between different places from a broader social geographic perspective offers an alternative and productive lens of analysis.

Mass Media Studies and Reflection on Anthropological Field Sites

I proposed that ethnographic projects involving cities in the age of global capitalism can benefit from drawing the boundaries of “field sites” based not on geographical area or administrative unit, but rather on the living community: the space and society in which people move or travel, ideas flow, and commodities and capital are transacted. This is not an entirely new perspective but rather is based on earlier anthropological works considering the notion of “field” – including, among others, the work of George Marcus on multi-sited ethnography for projects in/of a world system (1998), of Lila Abu-Lughod on sites of mass media production (1997), distribution, and consumption, and of Louisa Schein on the notion of the “field”. It also represents a response to the urge of urban theorists, including David Harvey (2006) and Manuel Castells (2000), to consider new kinds of space and time in the age of the global economy.

The ethnographic study on which this dissertation is based was influenced by the suggestion of George Marcus on how to conduct anthropological research in a trans-local field site (1995; 1998). Marcus suggested that in multi-site ethnography researchers can follow a limited number of markers, including people, things, and metaphors. Inspired by Marcus, in the earlier stage of my research on mass media, I planned to identify and “follow” a few television and video programs through production, distribution, and consumption. I was unable to fully carry out this plan mostly because the flexibility, mobility and money required for such a project exceeded my expectations. Nevertheless, I learned various important lessons through my attempts to complete such a project. First, despite strict state censorship of mass media, producers still see television and video programs as commodities and profit as the key driver of their production. Second, in

China the production of television and video programs – particularly entertainment programs – is heavily trans-nationalized in terms of capital, talent and program content and format. The above characteristics imply that foreign perspectives and concerns – or their localized (and censored) versions – are profitable. Third, from the perspective of consumers, trans-nationally produced media programs are not necessarily viewed as transnational or foreign; the popularity of television and video programs frequently results from their ability to speak for and reflect particular local experiences. Local history and socio-cultural environments, above and beyond producer intention, contribute to the appropriation of specific media programs. This confirms the argument of anthropologists of mass media that mass media has become a key ingredient of the context in which people live their lives, and investigation of the use of mass media informs us regarding society and people. Focusing on mass media as commodity, rather than on producers, distributors or consumers, offers a vantage point for detaching from specific social groups and seeing the dynamics of diverse social groups in a society. I believe that ethnographic research using field sites not defined by geographic or administrative boundaries, and employing the method of Marcus to follow people, things or metaphors, can assist my future study of migrant laborers, contact zone, and economic globalization .

Beijing after the Olympics

By the time my readers read this chapter, the 2008 Beijing Olympics will already be history. China will have proved that it ranks among the leading nations of the world. Beijing – supported by global reserves of talent and capital and enjoying strong state support – will have significantly improved its urban infrastructure and landscape, enjoyed the glory attendant in hosting the world to a splendid event and, and proudly positioned itself as being as modern and international as other world cities. Looking ahead, it is interesting to consider what kind of city Beijing will become. Once the greatness of the city and the nation it stands for are obtained and showcased, what will be the next step for this city – simultaneously the capital of a large capitalist market but also of a powerful communist state? How will China sustain its role as a global leader? What will the endeavor of the nation-state as a world leader require Beijing to become? Will the attempts to be a leader of the world community result in minimizing or enlarging existing social differentiations or produce new forms of social differentiation? What kinds of life will the business professionals, hutong working class families and migrant laborers studied in this dissertation live in the future? Will they remain in Beijing? Will the nation-state continue to dominate the city? Asking these questions, I wish to hold a close focus on three things: the speed of change in Beijing, the role of the state in change, and how different groups of people both influence and experience the process of change. This study examined how the combination of state policy and economic globalization has influenced Beijing, or more precisely, has differently impacted various populations within the city and contributed to social differentiations. I am very curious to see what the future holds for Beijing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abu-Lughod, Lila
 1993 Finding a Place for Islam Egyptian Television Serials and the National Interest. *Public Culture* (5):493-513.
- 1997 The interpretation of culture(s) after television. *Representations* 59(Summer):109-34.
- Anderson, Benedict
 1983 *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Anonymous
 2000 Baoliu Gu Jianzu, Xinjian Siheyuan, Xiushan Lao Hutong -- San Nian Fuhuo Liulichang. *In* Beijing Youth Daily. Pp. 3. Beijing.
- 2001 Business: Unscrambling the signals; Broadcasting in China. *The Economist* 361(8245):92.
- Appadurai, Arjun, ed.
 1986 *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.
- 1990 Disjuncture and difference in the Global Cultural Economy. *Public Culture* 2(2):1-24.
- 1996 *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre
 1984 *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. R. Nice, transl. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Castells, Manuel
 1989 *The information city: information technology, economic restructuring, and the urban-regional process*. Oxford & Cambridge: Basil Blackwell.
- 1996 Megacities and the End of Urban Civilization. *NPQ: New Perspective Quarterly* 13(3):12-14.
- 2000 Toward a Sociology of the Network Society. *Contemporary Sociology* 29(5):693-9.
- Chu, Godwin C.
 1977 *Radical Change through Communication in Mao's China*. Honolulu: An East-West Center Book.
- Davin, Delia
 1999 *Internal Migration in Contemporary China*. New York: St Martins Press.
- Deng Xiaoping
 1993 *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan: Di San Juan*: Renmin Chubanshe.
-

- 1994 (1983) Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan: Di Er Juan. Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe.
- Dutton, Michael, ed.
1998 *Streetlife China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Elvin, Mark, and G. William Skinner
1974 *The Chinese city between two worlds*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Fan, Y., N. Chen, and D. A. Jurbtm
1996 *Chinese Peasant Entrepreneurs: An Examination of Township and Village Enterprises in Rural China*. *Journal of Small Business Management* 34(4):72-76.
- Farquhar, Judith
1996 *Market Magic: Getting Rich and Getting Personal in Medicine after Mao*. *American Ethnologist* 23(2):239-57.
- Friedmann, John
2005 *China's urban transition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Fusai'er, Baoluo
1998 *Gediao: Shehui Dengji Yu Shenghuo pinwei*. Liang Lizhen, Yue Tao, and Shi Tao, transl. Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe.
- Fussell, Paul
1992 [1983] *Class: A Guide Through the American Status System Touchstone*.
- Gupta, Akhil, and James Ferguson, eds.
1997a *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- , eds.
1997b *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Han Shaogong
1997 *Maqiao Cidian*. Taipei: Shibao Wenhua.
- Hanser, Amy
2008 *Service Encounters: Class, Gender, and the Market for Social Distinction in Urban China*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Harvey, David
2006 *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development*. London New York: Verso.
- He Qinglian
2000 *Dangqian Zhongguo Shehui Jiegou Yanbian de Zongtixing Fenxi Dangdai Zhongguo Yanjiu* (3).
- Hegel, G. W. F.
1977 (1910) *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. A.V. Miller, transl. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hershatter, Gail
2002 *The Gender of Memory: Rural Chinese Women and the 1950s*. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28(1):43-70.
- Hong, Junhao
1998 *The Internationalization of Television in China: the Evolution of Ideology, Society, and Media since the Reform*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Huang, Yu, and Xu Yu

- 1997 Broadcasting and Politics: Chinese television in the Mao Era, 1958-1976. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 17(4):563-574.
- Jia Pingwa
1999 Lao Xian: Feidu Xieyang. Nanjing: Jiangsu Meisu Publisher.
- Lee, Leo Ou-fan
1999 Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Li Jingguo
2002 Zhongguo Baixing Lanpishu: Chengshihua de shida jiaodian. *In* Beijing Youth Daily. Beijing.
- Li Peilin, Li Qiang, and Sun Liping, eds.
2004 Zhongguo Shehui Fenceng. Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe.
- Lu Xueyi, ed.
2002 Dangdai Zhongguo Shehui Jiecheng Yanjiu Baogao. Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe.
- , ed.
2004 Dangdai Zhongguo Shehui Liudong. Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe.
- Lynch, Daniel C.
1999 After the Propaganda State: Media, Politics and 'Thought Work' in Reformed China. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Mandel, Ernest
1978 Late capitalism. London: Verso.
- Mankekar, Purnima
1999 Screening Culture, Viewing Politics: An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood, and Nation Postcolonial India. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Marcus, George E.
1995 Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24:95-117.
- 1998 Ethnography Through Thick and Thin. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Marx, Karl
1976 Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. 3 vols. B. Fowkes, transl. Volume 1: Penguin Books.
- Mauss, Marcel
2000 The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies. W.D. Halls, transl: W. W. Norton & Company.
- McDougall, Bonnie S.
1980 Mao Zedong's "Talk at the Yan'an conference on literature and art": a translation of the 1943 text with commentary. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan.
- Mueggler, Eric
2001 The Age of Wild Ghosts: Memory, violence, and place in Southwest China. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Murphy, Rachel

- 2000 Return Migration, Entrepreneurship and Local State Corporatism in Rural China: the experience of two counties in south Jiangxi. *Journal of Contemporary China* 9(24):231-47.
- Oi, Jean
1999 *Rural China Takes Off: Institutional foundations of economic reform*: University of California Press.
- Pratt, Mary Louise
1992 *Imperial Eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Ramos-Zayas, Ana Y.
2007 Becoming American, Becoming Black? Urban Competency, Racialized Spaces, and the Politics of Citizenship among Brazilian and Puerto Rican Youth in Newark. *Identities* 14(1):85-109.
- Rofel, Lisa B.
1994 Yearnings: televisual love and melodramatic politics in contemporary China. *American Ethnologist* 21(4):700-722.
- Sassen, Saskia
1988 *The mobility of labor and capital: a study in international investment and labor flow*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1991 *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- 1994 *Cities in a World Economy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Forge Press.
- 1999 Whose City Is It? Globalization and the Formation of New Claims. *In* *Cities and Citizenship*. J. Holston, ed. Pp. 177-194. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- 2006 *Cities in a World Economy*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.
- Schein, Louisa
2000 *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- 2001 Chinese Consumerism and the Politics of Envy: Cargo in the 1990s. *In* *Whither China: Intellectual Politics in Contemporary China*. X. Zhang, ed. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Schiller, Herbert I.
1989 Thinking about media power: who holds it? A changing view. *In* *Culture, Inc.: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression*. Pp. 135-156. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Seligmann, Linda J.
1989 To Be in between: The Cholas as Market Women. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31(4):694-721.
- Solinger, Dorothy

- 1999 Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Stranahan, Patricia
 1990 Molding the Medium: The Chinese Communist Party and the Liberation Daily. Armonk, NY: An East Gate Book.
- Watson, James L., ed.
 1984 Class and Social Stratification in Post-Revolution China. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Weber, Max
 1946 From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills, transl. London: Routledge.
- Wen, Guanzhong James, and Gene Hsin Chang
 1999 Communal Duality: Agricultural Subsidies from TVEs. Contemporary Economic Policy 17(1):79-86.
- Yan Hairong
 2003a Neoliberal Governmentality and Neohumanism: Organizing Suzhi/Value Flow through Labor Recruitment Networks. Cultural Anthropology 18(4):493-523.
- 2003b Spectralization of the rural: Reinterpreting the labor mobility of rural young women in post-Mao China. American Ethnologist 30(4):1-19.
- Zhang, Li
 2001 Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks within China's Floating Population. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Zhang, Zhihong
 1999 Rural Industrialization in China: From Backyard Furnaces to Township and Village Enterprises. East Asia: An International Quarterly 17(3):61-87.

GLOSSARY

Anhui	安徽	a province in southern China
ayi	阿姨	local term for a domestic help in Beijing
Baihuo Dalou	百貨大樓	“Department Store” – the name of an old and famous department store in Beijing
bailing	白領	white collar (e.g. white collar workers)
beifangren	北方人	Northerners
Beijing	北京	the capital of China and the main field site of this dissertation
Beijingren	北京人	Beijinger(s)
Beipiao	北漂	Beijing wanderers: originally referring to young artists without Beijing hukou who came to Beijing to establish themselves and capitalize on the city’s well developed art markets and resources; later, applied to describe anybody, whether white collar workers, college graduates, skilled workers, laborers, and so on, who works in Beijing without a Beijing hukou
Beijing Shangwu Zhongxinqu Kongzhixing Xiangxi Guihua	北京商務中心區控 制性詳細規劃	Detailed Control Plan for the Beijing Central Business District
biaomianguang	表面光	the unspoken tagline of <i>lufendang</i>
biaozhunde putonghua	標準的普通話	standard mandarin
Chao Hu	巢湖	Lake Chao
Chaoyang Gongyuan	朝陽公園	Chaoyang Park
cheng	城	city or walled city
chengliren	城裏人	urban insider: denoting those considered full members of an urban community
chengshi	城市	City
chengxiang	城鄉	city and/versus the countryside
chengzhen	城鎮	city-town or urban place

<i>chengzhenhua</i>	城鎮化	Urbanization
<i>choudoufu</i>	臭豆腐	stinky tofu
<i>cun</i>	村	Village
<i>Cun Cun Tong Guangbo Dianshi Gongcheng</i>	村村通廣播電視工 程	Engineering Project of Radio and Television for Every Village
<i>Diaojiaolou</i>	吊腳樓	houses on stilts or hanging houses
<i>dagongmei</i>	打工妹	female migrant laborer, and generally used to denote younger female migrants
<i>Daguo Jueqi</i>	大國崛起	The Rise of Great Nations: a 12-episode documentary popular in China
<i>Dajia</i>	打假	‘anti-fakes’: a term most often used to describe efforts to stop the sale of fake goods
<i>dajie</i>	大姐	middle-aged woman
<i>dang'an</i>	檔案	personal file
<i>dangdehoushe</i>	黨的喉舌	throat and tongue of the party: referring to the state controlled mass media of China
<i>Dongfangzhizi</i>	東方之子	The Children of the Orient: A popular news program on China Central Television
<i>danwei</i>	單位	work-unit
<i>danwei fuli fang</i>	單位福利分房	work-unit community
<i>danweilou</i>	單位樓	work-unit residence
<i>Daobeiren</i>	道北人	Henan migrants living north of the railroad that cuts through Xi'an
<i>dao chengli lai, xiang zhenqian de nongmin</i>	到城裏來想掙錢的 農民	peasants who come to the city hoping to make some money
<i>daye</i>	大爺	middle-aged or elderly men
<i>dengji</i>	等級	rank
<i>Deng Xiaoping</i>	鄧小平	the leader of China from 1978 to the early 1990s
<i>dili dou gande maoyanle! Youbanfa de hua shuihui likai haizi ne!</i>	地裏都乾得冒煙 了！有辦法的 話，誰會離開孩	the farmland had become dried and ‘smoky’ (i.e. barren)! Who would leave their children if they had other choices!

	子呢!	
<i>dongbian</i>	東邊	east side
<i>duiwai kaifang</i>	對外開放	opening up to the outside world
<i>dushi</i>	都市	city
<i>erjushi</i>	二居室	two-room apartment
<i>fei</i>	費	a noun meaning budget or fee, and a verb meaning to waste, wear out or lose
<i>Feidu</i>	廢都	The Abandoned Capital: a novel by Jia Pingwa
<i>fei nongye</i>	非農業	non-agricultural or non-agriculture
<i>fenling</i>	粉領	pink collar: referring to female white collar workers
<i>fuli fenfang</i>	福利分房	work-unit residence distribution system
<i>fuzao</i>	浮躁	anxious
<i>gaige</i>	改革	reform
<i>Gaige Kaifang</i>	改革開放	Reform and Opening-Up: referring both to Deng Xiaoping's political and economic policy and the period since 1978
<i>ganchang</i>	趕場	periodic market
<i>gaogui haohua de difang</i>	高貴豪華的地方	high-end and luxurious places
<i>gaoxinjishuqu</i>	高新技術區	high technology district
<i>Gediao</i>	格調	<i>Taste</i> – title of the Chinese translation of Paul Fussell's <i>Class: A Guide through the American Status System</i>
<i>Gongbei Kou'an</i>	拱北口岸	Gongbei Customs Port
<i>gongcheng</i>	工程	engineering project
<i>Guangbo jincun, wadiao qiongen; dianshi jinhu, facai zhifu</i>	廣播進村，挖掉窮根；電視進戶，發財致富	radio in the village, removing poverty; television in the household, making everyone rich
<i>Guangxian Chuanmei</i>	光線傳媒	Enlight Media
<i>guanxi</i>	關係	social or interpersonal connections
<i>Guizhou</i>	貴州	a province in southwestern China

<i>guo</i>	鍋	literally ‘pot’: referring to satellite dishes
<i>Guoji Xiaofeizhe Quanyi Jinianzi</i>	國際消費者權益紀念日	International Consumer Rights Day
<i>Guomao</i>	國貿	China World Trade Center
<i>guo shang hao yidianr de shenghuo</i>	過上好一點兒的生活	live a better life
<i>he cha</i>	喝茶	having tea
<i>Heilongtan</i>	黑龍潭	a place in northern Shaanxi
<i>heipai che</i>	黑牌車	“black license plate” car: denoting cars registered by foreigners
<i>Heshang</i>	河殤	River Elegy: a program produced by China Central Television
<i>Hexieshehui</i>	和諧社會	Harmonious society: a key slogan of Hu Jintao, the current leader of China
<i>hukou</i>	戶口	household register or household registration
<i>Hunan</i>	湖南	a province in southern China
<i>hutong</i>	胡同	small alleyway in Beijing’s traditional courtyard house neighborhoods
<i>jialei</i>	家累	family obligation
<i>jiamao weilie shangping</i>	假冒偽劣商品	fake or substandard merchandise
<i>jianchi Gaige Kaifang</i>	堅持改革開放	insist on the Reform and Opening-Up
<i>jiaoguan</i>	教官	instructor
<i>Jiating Lianchan Chengbao Zerenzhi</i>	家庭聯產承包責任制	Household Responsibility System
<i>jiaxiang de xinwen</i>	家鄉的新聞	hometown news
<i>jieceng</i>	階層	class: the preferred term for referring to vertical social difference, whether involving class, status, or some other form of social stratification
<i>Jiedao</i>	街道	the lowest level of local government
<i>jieqian</i>	解籤	fortune-telling
<i>jiequi</i>	接軌	linking tracks: referring to development policies designed to reduce the gap between China and other nations

<i>Jieji</i>	階級	class: referring to the Marxist and Leninist concept of class
<i>jieshi</i>	街市	market street
<i>jihuoshichang</i>	集貨市場	food market
<i>jinbu</i>	進步	indicating the action of progress, or alternatively that something is advanced
<i>jincheng</i>	進城	visiting or moving to the city
<i>jingji shuiping</i>	經濟水平	economic level
Jingyuchi	金魚池	an area in central Beijing
Junshibowuguan	軍事博物館	Military Museum
<i>kaifang</i>	開放	opening up
<i>kaifang yanhai chengshi</i>	開放沿海城市	opening up coastal cities
<i>kandao shenme xihuande dongxi, jiu neng haobuyouyude maixialai</i>	看到什麼喜歡的東西，就能毫不猶豫的買下來	whenever I saw something I liked in the shops, I would be able to buy it without hesitation
<i>Kewang</i>	渴望	Yearning: a popular TV series
<i>laobaixing</i>	老百姓	the ordinary people; in this dissertation the term refers particularly to poor working class families
<i>lao Beijingren</i>	老北京人	old Beijinger(s): indicating native residents of Beijing, namely those families who have lived in the city for generations and usually since the imperial era
<i>laojia</i>	老家	native home
<i>laowu shichang</i>	勞務市場	labor market
<i>laoxiang</i>	老鄉	people from one's native place
<i>Lianghui</i>	兩會	Two Meetings: referring to the annual meetings of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and National People's Congress (NPC)
<i>Liaowan</i>	瞭望	<i>Outlook</i> : a Chinese news magazine
Li Delai	李德來	the vice-president of Guangxian Chuanmei
Liulichang	琉璃廠	an old courtyard house neighborhood in

		central Beijing, long famous as the antique quarter of the city
Liulichang	琉璃廠東大街	Liulichang East Avenue
Dongdajie		
Liulichang Wenhua Chanye Yuanqu	琉璃廠文化產業園區	Liulichang Cultural Industrial Park
Liulichang Xidajie	琉璃廠西大街	Liulichang West Avenue
loufang	樓房	high-rise buildings or multi-storey houses
lufendan	驢糞蛋	donkey droppings: referring to bad things covered by an attractive façade
mang cun	盲村	illiterate villages
Mangliu	盲流	blind flow: indicating migrant workers who have come to the cities to try their luck
mantou	饅頭	Chinese steamed bread
Mei shang daxue tan neng zuo shenmene? Neng zuo shenmene? Women yijing shiqu nianshu de jihui le! Ta weishenme yao fangqi ziji ne?	沒上大學他能作什麼呢？能作什麼呢？我們已經失去唸書的機會了！他為什麼要放棄自己呢？	what can he do without a college degree? What can he do? We lost our chance of getting an education! Why is he giving up on himself?
mianzi	面子	face
Miaonian	苗年	New Year of the Miao minority
mingong	民工	migrant laborer or migrant worker
mingong zidi xuexiao	民工子弟學校	school for children of migrant laborers
Nanfang Tanhua	南方談話	Addresses during Deng Xiaoping's Inspection Tour to South China
Nanxun Jianghua	南巡講話	Addresses during Deng Xiaoping's Inspection Tour to South China
naxie dongbian de bailing	那些東邊的白領	those white-collar workers from the east side (of Beijing)
neidi	內地	hinterland
neidiren	內地人	people of the hinterland
nimen zhaxie ren	你們這些人	you people

<i>ni shi shuo jiecheng ba</i>	你是說階層吧	do you mean <i>jiecheng</i>
<i>nishuo, ren he ren zenneng cha zheme duo ne</i>	你說 ,人跟人怎能差 這麼多呢	how can the differences between people be so huge
<i>nongcun gaige</i>	農村改革	rural reform
<i>nongmin</i>	農民	peasant
<i>nongmingong</i>	農民工	peasant-turned-migrant laborer
<i>nongye</i>	農業	agricultural or agriculture
<i>peiyang xiaofeizhe</i>	培養消費者	cultivate consumers
<i>pinfu chaju</i>	貧富差距	uneven distribution of wealth
<i>qing juguo zhili</i>	傾舉國之力	employing the strength of the entire country
<i>qinqiang</i>	秦腔	a traditional opera of Shaanxi
<i>qingzhuan</i>	青磚	blue brick
<i>qiu gongdao</i>	求公道	search for justice
<i>qiu gongping zhengyi</i>	求公平正義	search for justice
<i>qiyehua</i>	企業化	corporatization
<i>quanqiu chengshi</i>	全球城市	global city
<i>quanqiu hua</i>	全球化	globalization
<i>rang dang he guojia de shengyin chuanru qianjiawanhu</i>	讓黨和國家的聲音 傳入千家萬戶	make the voices of the party and state heard in thousands of households
<i>rang yibufen ren xian fu qilai</i>	讓一部份人先富起 來	let some people get rich first: an important slogan of Deng Xiaoping
<i>rang yibufen [youtiaojiande] ren he difang xian fu qilai, xianfu dai houfu, zuizhong dadao gongtong fuyu</i>	讓一部份 (有條件 的) 人和地方先 富起來 , 先富帶 後富 , 最終達到 共同富裕	Let some people and places (those better able to do so) get rich first, and let the early rich help the later rich to ultimately achieve common prosperity
<i>renkou wenti</i>	人口問題	the issue of population
<i>Sanlitun</i>	三里屯	a famous shopping and nightlife destination in Beijing catering to foreign visitors and residents as well

		as Beijing's young urban professionals
<i>Sannian Ziran Zaihai</i>	三年自然災害	the Three Years of Natural Disasters or the Great Chinese Famine
<i>Sannong</i>	三農	Shortened name of <i>Sannongwenti</i>
<i>Sannongwenti</i>	三農問題	The (three) problems involving agriculture, peasants, and rural villages
<i>Shaanbei</i>	陝北	Northern Shaanxi
<i>Shaanxi</i>	陝西	a province in Northwestern China
<i>shang Beijing</i>	上北京	to go to Beijing
<i>Shanghai techan</i>	上海特產	specialty of Shanghai
<i>shangping fang</i>	商品房	commodified residential compounds or houses
<i>shangpinfang</i>	商品房市場	commercial housing market
<i>shichang</i>		
<i>shangou</i>	山溝	ravine
<i>Shangwu Zhongxin Qu</i>	商務中心區	Central Business District (CBD)
<i>shehui fenceng</i>	社會分層	social stratification
<i>shehui jiegou</i>	社會結構	social structure
<i>shehui liudong</i>	社會流動	social mobility
<i>shengji</i>	升級	upgrading
<i>shengshi</i>	盛世	flourishing age
<i>Shenzhen</i>	深圳	One of the first Special Economic Zones of China, now a major city adjacent to Hong Kong
<i>shewai gongyu</i>	涉外公寓	housing complexes for foreigners
<i>Shidayuanshai</i>	十大元帥	Ten Commanders-in-Chief
<i>Shiguanqu</i>	使館區	diplomatic district
<i>shijie chengshi</i>	世界城市	world city
<i>shijingxiaomin</i>	市井小民	ordinary people
<i>shimin</i>	市民	citizen
<i>shushu</i>	叔叔	uncle
<i>sima</i>	四媽	fourth aunt
<i>siyue xue</i>	四月雪	April snow: Referring to the cottony catkins of poplar trees that fall all

<i>sixiang shang de boluanfanzheng</i>	思想上的撥亂反正	over Beijing in April correction of beliefs: a term from the Cultural Revolution
<i>Sui dang shengshi, ren feng huanian suzhi</i>	歲當盛世 ,人逢華年 素質	At a flourishing age in the prime of one's life quality
<i>techang</i>	特產	specialty products of a place
<i>tianguo</i>	天鍋	sky pot: referring to satellite dishes
<i>tiejuanmen</i>	鐵捲門	iron roller door
<i>tongchang yiban, yiban</i>	通常一半一半	usually half and half
<i>Tong Yige Shijie, Tong Yige Mengxiang</i>	同一個世界 ,同一個 夢想	One World, One Dream: the slogan of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games
<i>tuitang</i>	頹唐	dispirited
<i>tuopin zhifu benxiaokang</i>	脫貧致富奔小康	leave poverty behind, get rich, and rush towards a comfortable life
<i>Waicheng</i>	外城	outer city
<i>wailai wugong renyuan</i>	外來務工人員	migrant laborer
<i>waizi qiye</i>	外資企業	foreign-invested companies
<i>Wang Changtian</i>	王長田	the founder of Guangxian Chuanmei
<i>Wang'enfuyi</i>	忘恩負義	ungrateful
<i>Weixing Guangbo Dianshi Shouzhuan Zhan</i>	衛星廣播電視收轉 站	satellite TV receiving stations
<i>wenhua</i>	文化	culture
<i>wenyi qingnian</i>	文藝青年	educated youth, literally young adult of culture and arts
<i>women yinle</i>	我們贏了	we've won
<i>Wo Yi</i>	我姨	my aunt
<i>wuchan jieji</i>	無產階級	proletarian
<i>xiafang</i>	下放	send down (to rural places)
<i>xiagang gongren</i>	下崗工人	laid-off worker
<i>Xi'an</i>	西安	the provincial capital of Shaanxi and the second main field site of this dissertation
<i>xian ba zhuan ma qilai</i>	先把磚碼起來	stack bricks in the yard first

<i>xiandaihua</i>	現代化	modernization
<i>xiandaihuade chengdu</i>	現代化的程度	degree of modernization
<i>xiandaihua guoji chengshi</i>	現代化國際城市	modernized international city
<i>xiang</i>	鄉	countryside
<i>xiangcun</i>	鄉村	countryside-village or rural place
<i>xiangxiaren</i>	鄉下人	country bumpkins
<i>Xiangzhen Qiye</i>	鄉鎮企業	Township and Village Enterprise (TVE)
<i>Xinwen Lianbo</i>	新聞聯播	evening news broadcast
<i>xiao</i>	消	to eliminate, to use up, to cause to disappear, to dissolve or to spend
<i>xiaofei</i>	消費	spending money or consumption
<i>xiaofeizhe</i>	消費者	Consumer
<i>xiaofeizhe quanyi</i>	消費者權益	consumer rights
<i>xiagang gongren</i>	下崗工人	laid-off worker
<i>xiao laobaixing</i>	小老百姓	little <i>laobaixing</i>
<i>xiaoqu</i>	小區	apartment complex
<i>Xibu Da Kaifa</i>	西部大開發	Great Development of the West
<i>xicanting</i>	西餐廳	western restaurant
<i>Xijiang</i>	西江	a Miao village in Southeast Guizhou
<i>xin Zhongguo</i>	新中國	New China
<i>xusheng wawa</i>	學生娃娃	A reference to elementary school students in Xijiang that literally translates as “student kids”
<i>yangzi</i>	樣子	appearance
<i>Yayuncun</i>	亞運村	Asian Games Village
<i>yibian</i>	夷邊	barbarian border
<i>Yongbumingmu</i>	永不瞑目	Restless Death [translation mine]: A popular TV series
<i>youchan jieji</i>	有產階級	bourgeoisie
<i>yu shijie jiegui</i>	與世界接軌	linking tracks with the world
<i>yushijujin</i>	與時俱進	advancing together with the times: a slogan promoted by Chinese leader Jiang Zemin

<i>Yuwang</i>	慾望	Desire: a popular TV series
<i>zhanlue juece</i>	戰略決策	strategic decision
<i>zhanzhuzheng</i>	暫住證	temporary resident card
<i>zhe caishi zhenzheng Beijing laobaixing de shenghuo</i>	這才是真正北京老 百姓的生活	this is the life of the real ordinary Beijingers
<i>zheng</i>	鎮	town
<i>zhenzheng de guoji da dushi</i>	真正的國際大都市	truly international big city
<i>Zhichi Beijing Shen'ao</i>	支持北京申奧	Support the Beijing Olympics
<i>zhineng hukou</i>	只能餬口	only sufficient for subsistence
<i>zhiye dajiaren</i>	職業打假人	professional knockoff inspector
<i>Zhiyuan Da Xibei</i>	支援大西北	Supporting the Great Northwest
<i>zhizao dianshi guanzhong</i>	製造電視觀眾	produce a television audience
<i>zhongchan jieji</i>	中產階級	middle class
<i>zhongdian zhongxue</i>	重點中學	privileged high school
<i>Zhongguo Aolinpike Nian</i>	中國奧林匹克年	China's Olympic year
<i>Zhongguo gaige Kaifang Jinianbei</i>	中國改革開放紀念 碑	Monument to China's Reform and Opening-Up
<i>Zhongguo Guoji Maoyi Zhongxin</i>	中國國際貿易中心	China World Trade Center
<i>Zhongguo Qingnian Bao</i>	中國青年報	China Youth Daily
<i>Zhongguo Yule Baodao</i>	中國娛樂報導	Chinese Entertainment News
<i>Zhongguo zheng chuzai yige zenmebande shijianduan li</i>	中國正處在一個怎 們辦的時間段裡	China is at a time where its next step is uncertain
<i>Zhongyang Gongyi Meishu Xueyuan</i>	中央工藝美術學院	Central Academy of Arts and Design
<i>Zhongyang Shangwu Qu</i>	中央商務區	Central Business District (CBD)
<i>zhuangxiu</i>	裝修	renovation
<i>zhuan yijing zai yuanzi li ma qilai</i>	磚已經在院子裡碼	bricks have been piled up in our courtyard

<i>le</i>	起來了	
Zhuhai	珠海	a special economic zones in Guangdong province in southern China
<i>zijiren</i>	自己人	one of us
<i>zixue</i>	自學	self-learning
<i>zonghe zhongxue</i>	綜合中學	comprehensive high school
<i>zouxiang shijie</i>	走向世界	walking towards the world
<i>zouzipai</i>	走資派	pro-capitalist people

CURRICULUM VITA

Ju-chen Chen

Education

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| January 2009 | Doctor of Philosophy
Anthropology, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ |
| October 2000 | Graduate Certificate in Women's and Gender Studies
Women's and Gender Studies, Rutgers University
New Brunswick, NJ |
| May 2000 | Master of Arts
Anthropology, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ |
| June 1993 | Bachelor of Science
Psychology, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan |

Principal Occupation

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| September 1999 – Jan. 2000 | Teaching Assistant
Department of Anthropology, Rutgers University
New Brunswick, NJ |
| September 1996 – May, 1999 | Teaching Assistant
Department of Asian Languages and Cultures
Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ |
| August 1994 – July 1995 | Administrative and Teaching Assistant
Department of Psychology, National Taiwan University
Taipei, Taiwan |
| August 1993 - July 1994 | Research Assistant
Department of Psychiatry, Tri-Service General Hospital
Taipei, Taiwan |