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## Identity and space on the borderland between old and new in Shanghai: A case study

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Working Paper No. 2010/39

## **Identity and Space on the Borderland between Old and New in Shanghai**

A Case Study

Deljana Iossifova\*

May 2010

### **Abstract**

China's urban geography has been dramatically altered over the past three decades. The co-presence of splinters in urban fabric—contrasting and continuously changing in terms of condition, use, and socio-cultural consistency—is symptomatic for the country's contemporary transition, suspending existing spatial and temporal disconnections particularly on the borderland in-between old and new, poor and rich, traditional and modern. Focusing on three urban groups (long-term urban residents, rural newcomers, and urban newcomers) in a district of sociospatial diversity in Shanghai, this paper examines trajectories of urban restructuring, aspects of sociospatial identification, and elements of the person-environment-relationship.

**Keywords:** Shanghai, intraurban borderland, urban restructuring, rural-to-urban migration, coexistence, multiple identity, spatial identity

**JEL classification:** R26, R23, Z19

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## 1 Introduction

'China', Logan and Fainstein (2008) argue, 'is important not only for itself but because it has lessons for the world'. Urban China is in the focus of multidisciplinary research on topics ranging from urban stratification and inequality to changing urban governance (Chen and Sun 2006). In particular, the 'floating population' (*liudong renkou*)—'temporary' migrants who abandon the countryside in search of better livelihoods (Laquian 2006)—and an increasing sociospatial diversity in Chinese cities have become issues of rising professional and scholarly concern.

Although generally regarded as an expression of 'urbanity' (Sandercock 1998; Siebel 2000), urban diversity and coexistence have remained the subject of critical re-inspection (Fainstein 1999; Fainstein 2005). It has been argued that physical proximity not always translates into meaningful contact, and that everyday encounter usually does not result in a culture of recognition, but rather in a culture of tolerance (Valentine 2008). Tolerance, however, represents and manifests underlying power relations and unequal power distribution; the toleration of one group implies the existence of a dominant group holding the power to tolerate (Young 1990; Douglas 2002). Amin and Graham (1997) claim that the co-presence of multiple spaces, multiple times, and multiple relational webs is necessary for the establishment of an 'open city', where everyday social interaction and cultural confrontation in shared public space act as sources of social renewal, economic innovation, and creativity. Such shared public space can be found at the 'borders, or edges, between any two communities—whether differentiated racially, in terms of wealth or in terms of their programmatic focus' (Sennett 2006).

In the context of the typically splintered urban fabric of contemporary Shanghai, shared public space can be found in-between commodity developments and dilapidated communities. This paper draws on theories from multiple related disciplines to explore place-related identity negotiation under coexistence and to situate the role of physical proximity between socioeconomically and culturally different groups as a condition that either reinforces fear, the desire to segregate, and exclusion—or fosters tolerance, meaningful encounter, and recognition. After introducing the sociospatial context of the study, the paper looks at the ways in which residents in the selected fragmented focus area define the places they consider 'home', at how they differentiate themselves from the respective 'other', and at how they negotiate their sociospatial identities under co-presence and coexistence. The following section introduces the theoretical framework for the analysis of place-related identity in a sociospatially diverse urban setting.

## 2 Appropriation, boundaries and multiple identity

Almost a century ago, grappling to understand the forceful changes resulting from the industrial revolution, the Chicago School of Sociology developed ecological arguments about the city and the 'urban' (see, for instance, Park 1925). The city was defined as a 'relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals', and proximity, density, and diversity were seen as the conditions for the distinct ways of 'urban life' (Wirth 1938). The underpinning ecological determinism placed the research focus on population size, heterogeneity, and concentration, and especially on the negative aspects of urbanity that affected urban residents. A few

decades later, environmental psychologists began to investigate the relationship between human beings and their (urban) environment, and argued that ‘understanding and designing the environment for human activity’ is only possible ‘when both the environment and the user are considered together as one transaction’ (Moser and Uzzell 2003).

An early definition of the person-in-environment relationship asserted that ‘a sense of spatial identity is fundamental to human functioning [in that it] represents a phenomenal or ideational integration of important experiences concerning environmental arrangements and contact in relation to the individual's conception of his own body in space’ (Fried 1963). Because only the interaction between a person and an object gives meaning to the object, the experience of material things is social; the individual appropriates past experience by generating ‘self’ through the reproduction of previous knowledge and ability. The Marxist anthropological use of the term ‘appropriation’, particularly in reference to the appropriation of space, stands in relation to the processes of ‘exteriorization’, ‘objectification’, and ‘alienation’ (Graumann 1976). Psychologically, the process of appropriation is particularly important and involves the individual as well as the ‘historically accumulated and socially mediated experience’—it helps to understand how space becomes place when the individual takes possession of it, and, through the action of shaping or transforming it exteriorizes ‘self’ through reproduction: here, space becomes place through appropriation, and further becomes part of the individual self-concept; the mere possession of space cannot be considered ‘appropriation’ in a psychological sense (Graumann 1976). The process of appropriation is to be distinguished from that of ‘territoriality’, denoting the act of ‘establishing control over a defined space and applying to it a condition of ownership’ (Pitzl 2004).

Territoriality refers to the demarcation and defence of space and its delimitation by boundaries (Sommer 1969). Used to describe the mechanisms of defining or defending territory (Barnard and Spencer 1996), in anthropology ‘a boundary generally means the socio-spatially constructed differences between cultures/categories and a border generally stands for a line demarcated in space’ (van Houtum 2005). In border studies, the areas in ‘closest geographic proximity to the state border within which spatial development is affected by the existence of the boundary’ are considered ‘borderlands’ or transition zones, in that they mirror the opening and closing of borders between different social groups ‘desiring to maintain their cultural difference (exclusion)’ or seeking ‘to succeed in a new ecumene (inclusion)’ (Newman 2003). Barth (1969) acknowledges that ethnic boundaries can have ‘territorial counterparts’ and defines group membership as a category that ‘identifies itself and is identified by others’. Individuals are simultaneously subject and object of identification, and ascriptions assigned to a person or thing are most powerful when they encompass categorizations associated with belonging or being held responsible. This is relevant in that it relates to the interactional model of social identity as ‘multiple identities’, constituted by the three modes of ‘being identified’, ‘identifying with’, and ‘identification of’ (Graumann 1983).

In the ‘multiple identity’-model, humans are multiple beings: they are identified by their environment and simultaneously identify with something or somebody else, making tension ‘more probable than harmony’, and in particular so, when the attributes assigned to a person prove incompatible with the person’s desired identity (Graumann 1983). Here, ‘identification of’ refers to identifying the environment, i.e., the experience of sameness, or the feeling of familiarity. It is a process of category-formation: in reference to place, it means knowing place, feeling familiar with it, recognizing it. In

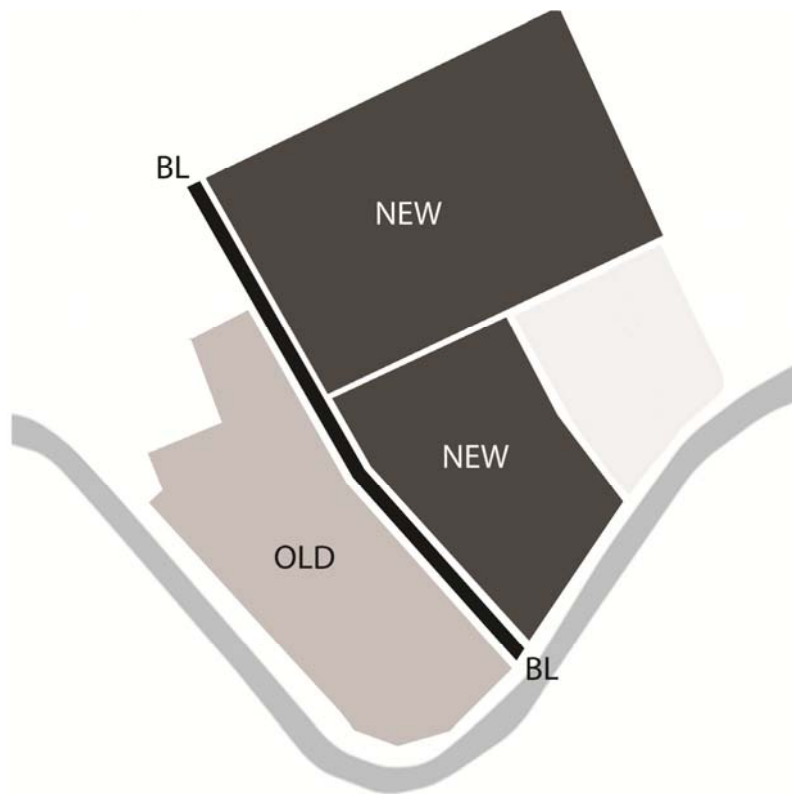
reference to ‘others’, it means distinguishing them from those whom the particular person does not know. How we refer to the ‘other’ in terms of space, objects, or people, describes the assigned meaning. ‘Identification of’ is hence a social process, it is a process highly influenced by outside, social forces. Graumann (1983) relates the process ‘identification of’ to appropriation, particularly in regards to language, as it involves the assignment of pre-existing categories (e.g., names) to objects or people. Further, ‘being identified [...] is not restricted to the life history of an individual or group’; the individual, being identified, is subject to typifications, that is, his or her membership in multiple groups is often overlooked and a single, collective identity is assigned (Graumann 1983). A third dimension, that of ‘identifying with’, refers to role models: the things and places we choose to identify with are representative of our values. The subject and object of identification may be individual or collective, usually referring to individuals as members of a certain group (category). Categorizing features, however, are not ‘objective’, but rather selective, i.e., ‘some cultural features are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some relationships radical differences are played down and denied’ (Barth 1969). The process of ‘othering’, of constructing ‘a singular and overarching system’ of classification, reduces individuals to targets and deprives them of their complexity; to counter ‘a choiceless singularity of human identity’, we need an accurate understanding of the human as a complex being that encompasses pluralities of identity (Sen 2007).

The research at hand is based on data collected during ten months of fieldwork between October 2006 and July 2009 in a district of Shanghai characterized by sociospatial fragmentation. Research took place in rotational and often simultaneous phases of fieldwork, analysis, literature review, and writing. Interviews were conducted with the assistance of an interpreter, and verbal permission to use gathered material was obtained from all participants. Subject to mutual consent, interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and translated and transcribed afterwards. No written account of the real names or contact information of participants is kept and random abbreviations for the names of individuals are used as to maintain their anonymity. Data analysis took place using the constant comparative method: first, datasets were compared with datasets; then, emerging concepts were compared with datasets; and finally, concepts were compared with concepts (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The research strategy allowed for flexibility in the selection and application of research methods, using different tools in order to find the answers to emerging research questions. The following section introduces the focus area and socioeconomical context.

### **3 Splintered space and social fragmentation**

The focus area contained several fragments of urban space, each representative of a certain stage of urban (re)development. The most pronounced difference could be found between OLD and NEW, two parts that were divided by BL, a vibrant street (Figure 1). OLD in the west was characterized by a lack of open space and low-rise, mostly two-storied, run-down buildings—made of wood, concrete, and masonry, hardly ever plastered, in combination with corrugated steel and plastic tarps—arranged along narrow alleys. These had become even narrower with the extensions that residents had added to their homes over time, owing to the overcrowded conditions inside the original structures. Homes usually lacked private bathrooms, so residents shared three public

Figure 1  
Diagrammatic map of the focus area (OLD, NEW, and BL).



toilets distributed across the site. OLD appeared decrepit from the outside, but was bustling with renovation and building activities within its boundaries. NEW was surrounded by a see-through fence and protected from unauthorized access by security guards at its gates. The compound had been completed just recently and was composed of 14 high-rise apartment buildings, with 15 to 18 stories each. Some of the buildings were slightly curved to create pseudo-courtyards in the spaces between buildings, featuring tennis-courts and designed landscapes, while most of the internal paths were occupied by parked automobiles. The compound had its own clubhouse, which took up the ground and first floor of one of the central high-rise blocks.

In-between OLD and NEW, the makeshift structures lining the west side of BL accommodated shops, service booths, small eateries, and dwellings. The sidewalk, if at all existent, was narrow and hardly walkable. Large, old trees seemed to grow out of the makeshift, temporary structures erected around their trunks. Whatever little space was left between the structures and the street was used for basic daily hygiene or other chores. On the other side of BL, the construction of a spacious sidewalk had just been completed, and small, young trees had just been planted, standing rather lost amidst the many kinds of things that occupants of OLD liked to store there: 'It is as if the two sides of [the street] are symbolic for the new society and the old one' (Anonymous 2006, in an online forum). However, a small-scale ethnographic study on urban life on this 'borderland' between OLD and NEW revealed a range of socioeconomic ties transgressing existing spatial borders as well as socioeconomic and cultural divisions (Iossifova 2009).

Between October 2006 and July 2009, 43 residents of the focus area were recruited via snowball sampling to take part in structured and in-depth interviews. Interviews were based on a predefined questionnaire, which contained 48 items and was structured around Graumann's (1983) previously introduced multiple identity model and Lalli's (1992) 'Urban Identity Scale'—a useful instrument for the measurement of place identity. In addition to the questionnaire-based interviews, open-ended, in-depth interviews were carried out with 20 individuals, and repeated follow-up interviews with nine. Based on photographic material, some of these interviews often triggered unexpected stories and reactions (Collier and Collier 1986; Schwartz 1989; Harper 2000). The follow-up interviews often evolved into fully-fledged life histories, as with time, interviewees were willing to share details that were more private.

Twenty-six participants were resident in OLD, 16 in NEW. All 15 respondents holding a rural *hukou* (household registration, which entitles to services only at the place of the official household registration; see, for instance, Cheng and Selden 1994; Chan and Zhang 1999; Wang 2002; Fan 2008) were residents of OLD; the remaining 28 urban *hukou* holders were distributed between OLD and NEW. Interviewees had very different levels of education: in OLD, 56 per cent had graduated from middle school; in NEW, 75 per cent held university degrees. This was reflected in the levels of annual income: in OLD, the majority made up to 48,000 RMB per year, while in NEW the majority had incomes of more than 96,000 RMB (see Table 1 for an overview over the sociodemographic composition of the sample). According to the representatives of respective *juweihuis* (neighbourhood committees), the composition of the interview sample for this study reflects somewhat the socioeconomic composition of residents in the different parts of the focus area. Due to the relatively small size of the sample, however, the analysis of in-depth interviews has been taken into account to substantiate findings, and the presented results are to be regarded as exploratory.

Table 1  
Sociodemographic information for urban groups in respective neighbourhoods (OLD/NEW)

	OLD		NEW
	Rural newcomers (N=15)	Waiters (N=12)	Urban newcomers (N=16)
Length of residence in Shanghai	6.9 (SD=3.59)	50.83 (SD=15.25)	35.56 (SD=22.10)
Length of residence in neighbourhood	4.84 (SD=3.48)	44.92 (SD=14.24)	7.28 (SD=12.55)
Age (years)	33.73 (SD=6.06)	58 (SD=14.95)	42.5 (SD=16.04)
Annual income (RMB)	40,400 (SD=17,634)	32,900 (SD=22,005)	177,600 (SD=134,485)
Residential area/capital (in m <sup>2</sup> )	6.15 (SD=2.88)	13.96 (SD=4.6)	39.80 (SD=9.90)
Rent per m <sup>2</sup>	43.96 (SD=37.24)	0.38 (SD=0.59)	13.76 (SD=31.89)
Educational background:			
Primary school, %	13	0	6
Middle school, %	60	50	13
High school, %	27	42	6
University degree, %	0	8	75
Employment:			
Student, %	0	0	13
Unemployed, %	0	8	13
Employed (private), %	33	25	19
Employed (state), %	7	25	19
Self-employed, %	60	0	13
Retired, %	0	42	25



In the focus area, rural *hukou* holders ('rural newcomers') often formed homogenous communities based on their place of origin, in houses that private, more affluent urban *hukou* holders were able to leave behind, or in former warehouses divided into tiny compartments without air, light, or sanitary facilities. *Juweihui* representatives explained that many 'original residents, the real Shanghainese', had moved out as soon as they were able to afford better places, and had rented their old homes to the 'many migrants that have been coming during the last years' (Interview with *juweihui* representatives, May 2009). Zheng et al. (2009) contend that the reason for migrants to 'choose' so-called 'urban villages' as their housing destination lies in the constraints set by their low incomes, which lets them opt for smaller rooms and higher rents per square meter. Indeed, residents of NEW, the 'urban newcomers' (a new urban middle class of young, well-educated professionals holding an urban *hukou*), lived on average in 40m<sup>2</sup> per person, and paid 14 RMB<sup>1</sup> rent or mortgage per m<sup>2</sup> and month. In OLD, 'waiters' (mostly unemployed or retired members of the former working class holding an urban *hukou*, who eagerly awaited an improvement of their residential conditions through resettlement in the course of urban redevelopment, albeit for the price of losing their existing social ties) lived within roughly 14m<sup>2</sup> per person and, in general, did not pay rent or mortgage. Rural newcomers, however, lived within an average of 6m<sup>2</sup> per person, but paid a staggering 44 RMB<sup>2</sup> per m<sup>2</sup> and month (see Table 1). This may be contributed to the reluctance to rent to rural migrants, who are left without a choice and forced to pay higher prices for worse living conditions.

In China, large numbers of rural-to-urban migrants (called *manmu liudong ren yuan*—'blind wanderers'—since the Great Leap Forward) have historically been associated with periods of social disruption (Guldin and Southall 1993). They often experience prejudice and everyday discrimination in addition to institutional exclusion (Li 2004), and their presence in the city is widely considered temporary, based on the assumption that they are reluctant to stay in the city because they do not see it as their 'home' (Fan 2008; Fan and Wang 2008). Contrary to observations in the existing literature (e.g., Zheng et al. 2009), however, 60 per cent of the interviewed rural newcomers in this study stated that they wanted to stay forever in the city (and, to be precise, in OLD), in contrast to only 42 per cent of their urban counterparts.

#### 4 Maps of fear and of desire

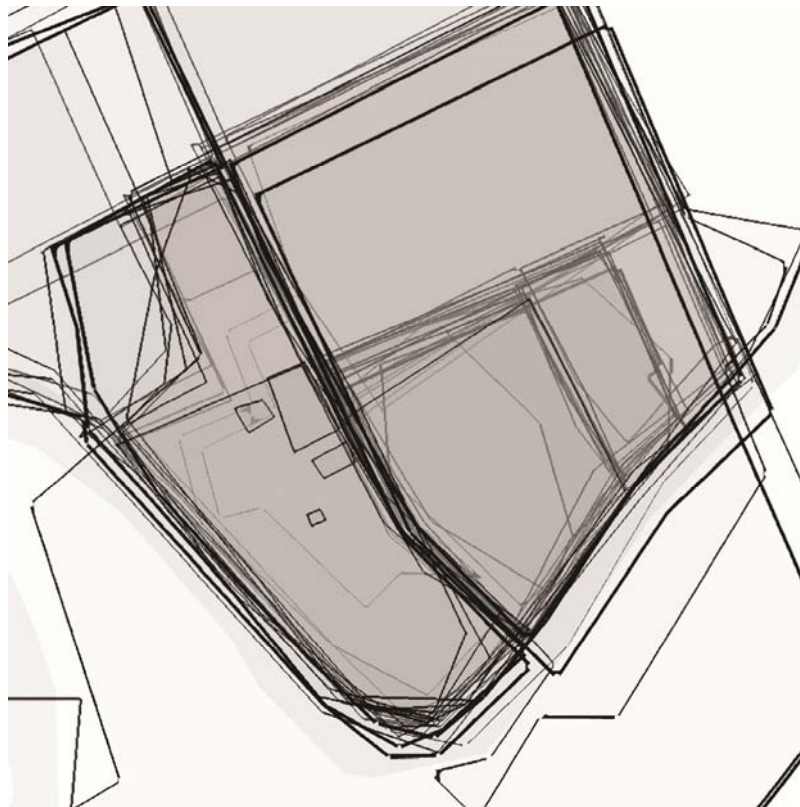
Drawing a boundary around the area that one considers 'home' can be interpreted as a process of 'identification with' and 'identification of' in the multiple identity model. In an application of 'bound graphic investigation' (Weichhart 1999), interview participants were asked to draw a boundary around the area that they considered 'home' on a map; alternatively, the interviewer drew the boundary for them, following their verbal instructions (some participants were illiterate or were not used to reading maps). This strategy not only delivered participants' cognitive maps of 'home', but also took away from the blurriness that usually surrounds discussions of space in terms of scale, and helped to define exactly the areas that participants were referring to later in the

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<sup>1</sup> 14 RMB = app. US\$2.

<sup>2</sup> 44 RMB = app. US\$6.

Figure 2  
Overlay of the cognitive maps drawn by all research participants



interviews. Participants drew very clear boundaries, and certain geographical conditions served many as special signifiers: to the east, the majority of participants delimited their neighbourhood where it met the motorway; to the north, the limitations were seen rather diversely, and to the northwest, the limits to ‘home’ differed from individual to individual (see Figure 2).

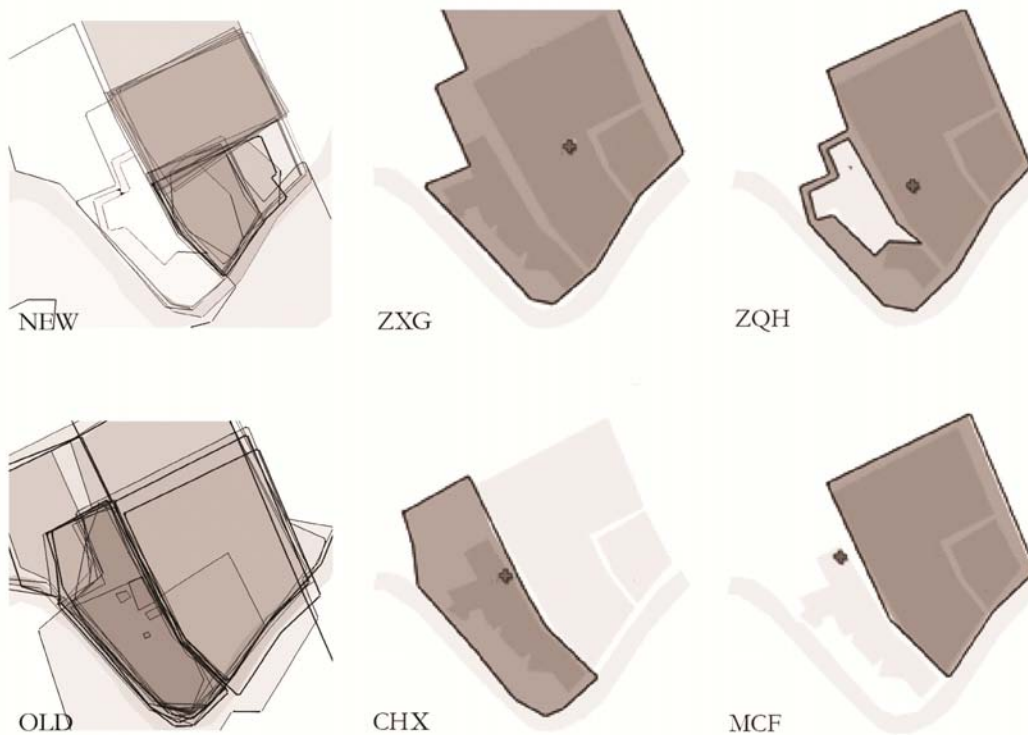
Residents of NEW exhibited very clear ideas of the boundary surrounding their homes: most of them stuck to the property limits of their residential compound, spatially defined by a fence (see Figure 3: NEW). Eager to stress that they did not identify with this part at all, all but one participant excluded OLD from their definition of home. The only exception to the rule here was constituted by participant ZXG: born in 1954 in the parts of the focus area now occupied by NEW, when his parental home was demolished in 2000, he was in the fortunate position to buy a ground-floor apartment in the new-built residential compound that came to replace his former neighbourhood: NEW. His cognitive map included OLD and NEW (see Figure 3: ZXG). According to him, his neighbourhood had ‘changed for the better’, as structures had been improved and ‘rich people have moved in’ (Interview with ZXG, September 2008). One of these ‘rich people’ was urban newcomer ZQH, who was born in 1980 and held an urban, though not Shanghainese, *hukou*. He moved to Shanghai after his graduation in 2002, and in early 2007 bought an apartment in NEW. His income as a real estate agent amounted to 15,000 RMB<sup>3</sup> per month, of which 5,000 RMB<sup>4</sup> was spent on mortgage. Even as he

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<sup>3</sup> 15,000 RMB = app. US\$2,200.

Figure 3

Top: Overlay of cognitive maps of residents in NEW; cognitive maps of residents ZXG and ZQH. Bottom: Overlay of cognitive maps of residents in OLD; cognitive maps of residents CHX and MCF



complained about the lack of contact and entertainment opportunities in his neighbourhood—‘no Starbucks, no bars, and no life like in other places’—ZQH stated that he was not interested in establishing social contacts here, and his cognitive map included the larger neighbourhood, but explicitly excluded OLD (Interview with ZQH, October 2007; see Figure 3: ZQH).

‘Waiters’ resident in OLD were generally more embracing: they were divided into those who saw NEW as part of their neighbourhood, expanded across the river to the south, and further up to the north; and those who felt encroached upon by new developments and saw their neighbourhoods shrinking to BL in the east (see Figure 3: OLD). Take the case of CHX: born in the focus area in 1956, she stated that all her social contacts were located in OLD, and stated that she would always remember ‘the house, the lanes, the neighbours, the weddings, the funerals, the festivals’ (Interview with CHX, October 2007). CHX’s cognitive map clearly excluded NEW (see Figure 3: CHX). As a ‘waiter’, she was desperate to be resettled as soon as possible. To her, the changes in her neighbourhood felt like a violation of her personal space: in addition to the workings of gentrification and commodification, the incoming rural newcomers in OLD added to the feeling of alienation, and triggered nostalgia for the past.

Rural newcomers in OLD expanded the areas they included often to the north, as many were comparatively mobile due to their businesses and knew this part well; others were

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<sup>4</sup> 5,000 RMB = app. US\$735.

only familiar with the immediate environments of their dwellings. Others again, despite being resident and working in OLD, felt completely unattached to this part, and chose to identify with NEW instead. For instance, MCF, a rural newcomer born in 1971, migrated to the focus area in 1994 and made a living from repairing bicycles and motorbikes. He earned 2,500 RMB<sup>5</sup> per month, of which 300 RMB<sup>6</sup> was spent on rent. The majority of MCF's social contacts, he claimed, were located within 'his' neighbourhood, which he delimited exclusively to NEW (see Figure 3: MCF). MCF claimed that OLD, where his actual home was located, was 'very dirty' and was of 'no interest' to him at all (Interview with MCF, October 2007). WY, a similar case, was born in 1980. As a rural newcomer, she came to the city in 2002, and lived in OLD ever since her marriage in 2004. Together with her husband, she kept a little store, earning an average 3,500 RMB<sup>7</sup> per month. Expressing strong insecurities about her own and the future of OLD, WY, too, defined NEW as her neighbourhood—like MCF excluding OLD. Weichhart (1999) refers to shifts of this kind as 'coping with cognitive dissonance through adjustment of borders'. Cognitive dissonance appears when the individual experiences two psychologically inconsistent cognitions and then seeks to reduce the dissonance in changing one of the cognitions and making it consistent with the other—usually, attitude follows behaviour (Festinger 1957). Here, the mental occupation of an area represents the psychological construction of a spatial map to fit a social image, instead of adjustment of the spatial mind map to a given social reality.

Content analysis of interview data revealed the attributes attached to the spaces that participants had defined previously in cognitive maps. Those who identified with NEW described it most often as 'modern', 'green', 'sophisticated', 'clean', 'in a good location', and 'offering good recreation opportunities', but also as 'not a place to make friends', 'not a place for young people', 'too quiet', 'lacking energy', 'lacking good management', and 'lacking entertainment opportunities'. Participants who identified with OLD referred to the area predominantly as 'the place where our friends are', where 'people help each other', and where 'good businesses' could be done. The attributes assigned to OLD included 'cheap', 'familiar', and 'satisfying', but also 'lacking facilities', 'lacking infrastructure', 'lacking open space', 'old', 'dark', and 'dirty'.

In order to make descriptions of the area more comparable, a semantic differential instrument (Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum 1967) was added to the standard questionnaire from September 2008 on. Thirty-three (out of 43 participants) were asked to rate their own and adjacent neighbourhoods via 21 items on a five-point Likert scale. Lalli (1992) argues that the own place is usually favoured in comparison to others, and that the own perceptions need not coincide with those of others. Results in the study at hand, however, show that how residents of OLD evaluate their neighbourhood (OLD (self)) coincides roughly with how it is evaluated by others (OLD (other); see Figure 4). The same holds true for NEW. Accordingly, there is a large gap between the self-evaluation of residents in OLD and their image of NEW, the 'other', where they generally evaluated NEW higher than their own neighbourhood. The gap is particularly evident for the parameters 'old-fashioned' (OLD) versus 'modern' (NEW) and 'poor' (OLD) versus 'luxurious' (NEW). Residents of NEW evaluated their own

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<sup>5</sup> 2,500 RMB = app. US\$365.

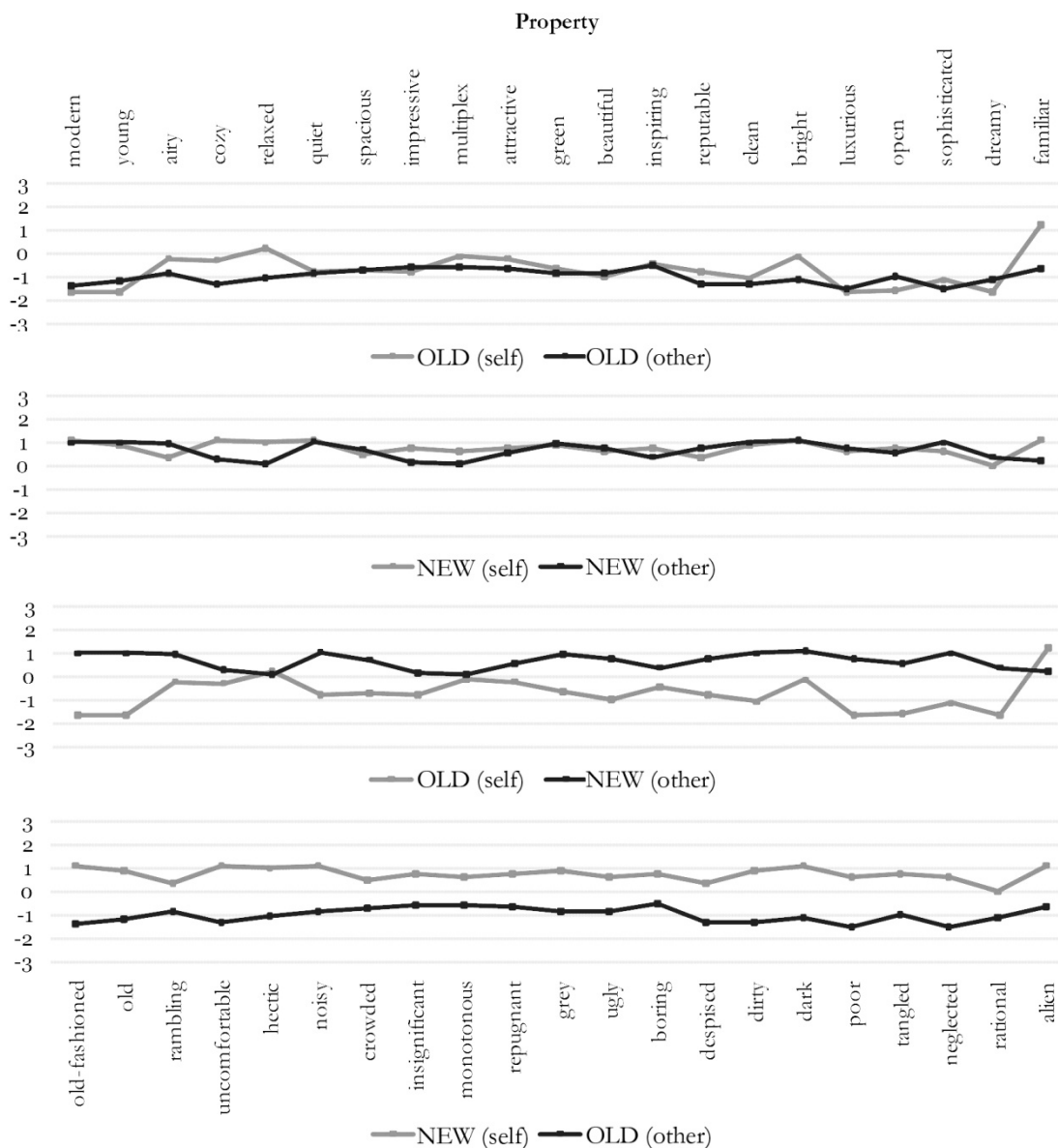
<sup>6</sup> 300 RMB = app. US\$45.

<sup>7</sup> 3,500 RMB = app. US\$515.

neighbourhood considerable better than adjacent OLD on all points, with the largest divergence for the parameters 'old-fashioned' (OLD) versus 'modern' (NEW), 'uncomfortable' (OLD) versus 'cosy' (NEW), and 'dirty' (OLD) versus 'clean' (NEW).

In this context, it is important to note that certain qualities were associated with the residents of the different parts of the focus area by the respective other. Residents of OLD sometimes looked 'up' to residents of NEW, associating them with better education. On the other hand, many thought of life in NEW as being lonely and deserted (Interviews with residents of OLD, April 2007 to July 2009). Following some probing in in-depth interviews, sometimes residents of NEW expressed feelings of attachment to OLD, despite initially sticking to 'official' views of disgust. Such feelings were triggered by memories of their former homes and by burgeoning inter-personal relationships with residents in OLD, whom they experienced as easier to encounter and as more open to neighbourly contact (Interviews with residents of NEW, April 2007 to July 2009).

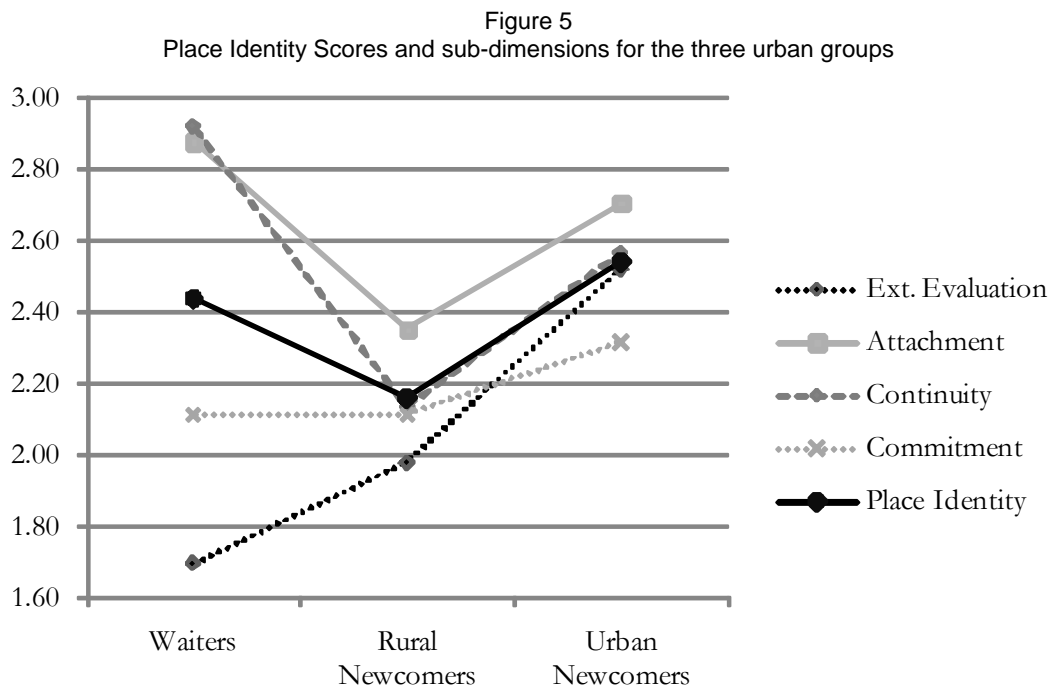
Figure 4  
What are the qualities ascribed to the 'self' and the 'other'? Semantic differential inquiry results



## 5 (Dis)location anxieties

The interactional model of multiple identity embraces simultaneously the many aspects of and contributors to the formation and maintenance of individual and group identity, and lends itself to the inquiry on the person-in-place relationship, and hence, spatial identity as part of self-identity (Graumann 1983). Lalli (1992) developed the Urban Identity Scale as an instrument for the measurement of spatial identity. The original scale was composed of five sub-dimensions, namely *external evaluation*, *familiarity*, *attachment*, *commitment*, and *continuity*, which, taken together, measure the strength of the person-environment-relationship. The modified Place Identity Scale (PIS) used in this investigation contains 14 items and four sub-dimensions, namely commitment (commitment toward the respective neighbourhood in the future, four items), attachment (feelings of familiarity and belonging in the present, four items), external evaluation (assumptions regarding the image of their neighbourhood, three items) and continuity (memories and experiences with regards to the past; three items). Respondents were asked to state their agreement or disagreement with statements relevant for each sub-dimension, scoring three points when they agreed, two points for ‘no opinion’, and one point when they disagreed. Figure 5 shows external evaluation, attachment, commitment, and continuity, as well as place identity scores according to urban groups.

It can be inferred that ‘identification of’ in the multiple identity model—the process of appropriation of social and historical meaning (the social construction of space)—is measured by the sub-dimension continuity; ‘being identified’ and ‘identification with’ are measured by external evaluation, particularly if the ‘objective’ conditions of the particular environment or the ‘actual’ external evaluation (the image) are known; ‘identification with’, as it refers to the hopes, aspirations, and desires of who and where one wants to be, is measured by commitment. Contrary to expectations, place identity scores did not differ significantly between the three urban groups, as neither did the



Notes: ‘Waiters’: the group of urban *hukou* holders inhabiting OLD; rural newcomers: the group of rural *hukou* holders inhabiting OLD; and urban newcomers: the group of urban *hukou* holders inhabiting NEW (1 = disagree; 3 = agree).

scores for the sub-dimension commitment. However, results showed significant differences for the sub-dimensions external evaluation, attachment, and continuity. 'Waiters' showed the highest values for continuity and attachment, and the lowest for external evaluation. Rural newcomers showed the lowest values on all scales apart from external evaluation. Urban newcomers exhibited the highest values for overall place identity and external evaluation.

The sub-dimension external evaluation was lowest among 'waiters' and highest among urban newcomers. In collective societies, location ('home') is not seen as a symbol of social status; in contrast, individuals in individualistic societies express their identity through material objects (Duncan 1985). Urban newcomers appropriate space in the first instance through purchase. Consumption of space as commodity is (often) the result of selectivity, and hence can be regarded as an expression of categorization: choosing one place or location over another. Choosing a gated residential compound (although most contemporary commodity housing in China is gated) in a particular location is the expression of previous 'identification of' as well as 'identification with'. This indicates that external evaluation—the status of symbolic representation, or social status ascribed to space—replaces (or rather, makes up for) other components of place identity among urban newcomers. The hostility toward OLD and its residents among urban newcomers can be interpreted as an expression of concerns about monetary investment; contrary to Graumann's (1976) assumption, psychological appropriation of space here seems to take place through purchase. Space has acquired the status of commodity, indicating a transition from a 'traditional' (or collective) to 'individualistic' society in the focus area.

The sub-dimension attachment was highest among 'waiters' and lowest among rural newcomers. 'Waiters' have appropriated their neighbourhood over a lifetime; they have constructed additions to their homes and shared open space on a daily basis. A previously tight-knit social network has contributed to a high level of social control within the neighbourhood. Dixon and Durrheim (2004) find that the disruption of place may become a way to 'justify collective resistance to social change' and to sustain ideologies of segregation. When the presence of the 'other' is perceived as deteriorating the identity-affirming qualities of the physical environment, the emerging sense of dislocation manifests in a sense of place alienation, disorientation, and nostalgia. Nostalgia is defined as 'a positively toned evocation of a lived past in the context of some negative feeling toward present or impending circumstance', which enables the individual to construct continuity of identity in response to a perceived threat to identity continuity (Davis 1979). 'Waiting' to be resettled, here, symbolized the eagerness to escape the increasingly alien living environment, along with all its implications of finding one's way around in a new market, among new socioeconomic classes (both the new middle class and the new underclass), inside transforming and increasingly alien space, and to start from scratch somewhere else. Here, recent changes, like the relocation of neighbours and the transformation of adjacent neighbourhoods, have contributed to the rise of feelings of insecurity and discontinuity. In addition, the appearance of increasing numbers of rural newcomers has contributed to the reinforcement of feelings of decreasing social control, and urban newcomers were experienced as another force encroaching upon both customary lifestyles and material space. Lastly, the danger of 'being identified' as shack-dwellers by urban newcomers has contributed to feelings of inferiority among 'waiters', and rural migrants appeared as welcome scapegoats for any negative developments. Territoriality behaviour on the part of 'waiters' emerges as a means to increase social control due to strong attachment to space.

The sub-dimension continuity was highest among ‘waiters’ and lowest among rural newcomers. With increasing length of residence, particularly when there are physical features which are part of collective memory (and have remained in place for a long time), the relations with one’s sociospatial environment grow stronger (see, for instance, Treinen 1965; Becker and Keim 1975; Thum 1981). This is particularly true in the Chinese context, where working-class neighbourhoods are sociospatially embedded in urban fabric as a spatial unit and a social community stemming from the legacy of the *danwei* (work unit, combining place of work with place of residence; see Bray 2005). ‘Waiters’ in OLD were often born on site or had helped to build the neighbourhood. Their continuous efforts to maintain the orderliness of their physical environment, for instance, can be contributed to a sense of continuity and attachment, stemming from long-term appropriation, and they can be interpreted as expression of individual territoriality behaviour, of defining and defending the space that they considered part of their identity in times of massive sociospatial transformation. Take CLS’s example. The oldest participant in this study came to Shanghai in 1947 and helped building his family’s house in OLD, where he has lived ever since. As a ‘waiter’, a representative of the old working class, he was very familiar with the focus area and aware of its sociospatial transformation. He had lost a part of his social network (due to age in part, due to displacement, or due to voluntary leave), and had watched the destruction of his working place and the construction of new buildings in the course of urban redevelopment. His claim that ‘not much has changed’ signified his attempt to reconcile the alienation that he had experienced from his sociospatial environment, particularly in view of the new class of rural-to-urban migrants—the new ‘underclass’ (Solinger 2006)—which he saw as further altering his formerly familiar neighbourhood, threatening identity continuity for him and triggering territoriality behaviour.

## 6 Conclusions

In this study, the relationship between place and identity has been examined in the context of a splintered neighbourhood in Shanghai. The growing presence of rural-to-urban migrants within a once socio-culturally homogenous urban environment marks the gradual disintegration of an institutionally imposed, historical divide between the ‘urban’ and the ‘rural’—and simultaneously the gradual disintegration of identity continuity for residents with an otherwise pronounced level of place-related identification. Here, the current urban condition provides ample opportunities for strangers to ‘mingle’ (Zukin 1995), and the borderland between contrasting communities constitutes ‘a site where people interact’ (Sennett 2006). But physical proximity of the different, as Valentine (2008) observes, not necessarily translates into ‘meaningful’ encounter.

The case study at hand demonstrates that place is charged with meaning. The appropriation of space is a process of boundary drawing and categorization, and the ways in which the environment is categorized define the person-environment relationship. Appropriation *per se* is a neutral process, and categorization of the environment precedes attachment to a category (particularly, ‘identification with’). Strong feelings of attachment can develop through experience (memories), increased self-esteem (image), and investment (property). Territoriality, the behaviour of not only defining, but also defending appropriated space, results from threats to a developed feeling of attachment or identification. Such threat is posed by discontinuities like the



loss (or lack) of social control, menacing displacement (the termination of the person-in-environment relationship), or perceived threat to property. Co-presence and coexistence of ‘difference’, in spatial and in social terms, in immediate adjacency contributes to the constant re-negotiation of presumably fixed categories. Rigid physical borders can be regarded as manifestations of territoriality; borderlands (and transition zones), on the other hand, result from ‘positive’ appropriation.

The existence of the ‘borderland’ implies coexistence; from the possible modes of coexistence in shared urban space (conflict, tolerance, and recognition), it is desirable to achieve the state of recognition as the ‘best’ mode—a mode of stable coexistence, in which conflict is negotiated through everyday encounter. Structural factors are important contributors to spatial identity and must be included in any discussion of inequality (Fried 1992). It is ‘only by assuring the integrity of some of the external bases for the sense of continuity in the working class, and by maximizing the opportunities for meaningful adaptation, [that we can] accomplish planned urban change without serious hazard to human welfare’ (Fried 1963). A culture of tolerance is not enough, and urban politics must address the questions of socioeconomic inequalities and power, be they real or perceived (Valentine 2008). Particularly in an autocratic society, it is the responsibility of the state to reinforce the possibility of long-term recognition through planning, social engineering, and design. If, in the Chinese case, decisionmakers will succeed to maintain and enhance existing opportunities and to propagate, rather than eradicate, difference, remains to be seen.

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