Jiaoyufication: When gentrification is driven by education
– a case study of Jiaoyufication in Nanjing

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Abstract: Gentrification, or the class-based restructuring of cities, is a controversial process regarding the shaping of urban space. This paper researches a variant form of gentrification, jiaoyufication (Chinese contextualization of education-led gentrification), and explores its characteristics and social-spatial consequences based on a case study in the inner city of Nanjing, China.

Key word: gentrification, jiaoyufication, education, urban space

Introduction

Adapted from the term gentrification, Chinese scholars have called a process of neighborhood changes driven by the demand for education resources as jiaoyufication, (jiaoyu means education in Chinese). (Wu, 2016; Chen, 2015) Since the conception of gentrification, ‘the process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents’, was proposed (Glass, 1964), this process which makes significant impacts on inner cities’ landscapes and social structure has been observed and researched in depth globally. Compared with the western world, gentrification exists in China with its own unique characteristics. Since the reform and opening up, China has witnessed rapid economic growth and rampant urbanization over the past decades. Among different varieties and extensions of gentrification, jiaoyufication, borrowing from the Chinese word “jiaoyu” (education), reflects a new social, economic, and spatial transformation. (Wu, 2016) Jiaoyufication describes a process led by education opportunities in which middle-class parents purchase apartments in the catchment areas of key schools to guarantee their children access to the schools resulting in neighborhood class conversion and displacement of low-income residents.

The following paper discusses the backgrounds, characteristics, and consequences of this special form of gentrification based on a case study in Nanjing, China.

Understanding jiaoyufication in the Chinese context

Lots of qualitative and quantitative researches on gentrification have been done from the perspectives of its spatial distribution, engines, and impacts on spatial and social makings in China. Different types of gentrification (tourism gentrification, rural gentrification, student gentrification etc.) are researched based on empirical studies. Among these, jiaoyufication is an important phenomenon with Chinese characteristics. Despite the existence of rich literature in gentrification, few has been written about jiaoyufication. Jiaoyufication distinguishes itself from other genres of gentrification as it has a special close association with the Chinese traditional custom of emphasis on education. Education is regarded as a significant opportunity for improving one’s social class by many families thus they spare no efforts on their children’s education investments. According to education policy enforced by the Chinese Ministry of Education, being admitted to primary schools is based on Hukou (household registration system), this is to say only students whose families’ Hukou are registered in the catchment area of the school are eligible to enroll in the school.
education resources are limited, the competition to attend key schools is extremely fierce. Therefore, the parents buy expensive apartments in the area to ensure their children are admitted, consequently causing jiaoyufication. Jiaoyufication often occurs in areas adjacent to key schools.

**Methods and case study**

Nanjing, the capital of Jiangsu Province, China, is the regional center of economy, technology, transportation, and education. In terms of education, it is well known for being one of the most advanced cities in higher and pre-higher education in China. Gentrification and residential differentiation has occurred in the inner city of Nanjing. (Song, 2010) As such, Nanjing is an ideal site to study jiaoyufication. In Nanjing, Lixue Primary School, located in the northwest of inner city, is among the top 3 primary schools. According to the census report, the catchment area of that school has witnessed a frequent flow of population and apartment purchases over the past decade. The catchment area of Lixue primary school was chosen as my study area as it demonstrates the characteristics of jiaoyufication clearly. (Wu, 2015) Figure 1 shows the location of my study area.

![Figure 1: location of research area](image1)

![Figure 2: research area map](image2)

This study involved observation, questionnaire, and interviews. A neighborhood-based sampling questionnaire survey was conducted in 2017 involved 216 residents living in the community, followed by face-to-face interviews with 24 participants subsequently selected from these. In addition, 12 individuals including real estate agents, neighborhood committee directors, and teachers from Lixue Primary School were interviewed in depth.

**Characteristics of Jiaoyufication**

![Figure 3: housing price](image3)

![Figure 4: photos of the area](image4)
In terms of the living environment, despite housing prices in the area being extremely higher than other areas (See Figure 3), it does not indicate high living standard conditions, with flimsy buildings requiring renovation built in the 1960s, the infrastructure of low quality, and insufficient parking spaces etc. (See Figure 4). According to the survey, the residents are most unsatisfied with sanitation (47%) and infrastructure construction (water, electricity, network supply) (35%). Differing from traditional gentrification, since the jiaoyufiers’ (gentrifiers in jiaoyufication) plan to sell the apartments after a few years, the built environments have not been improved due to the lack of efforts in community development by them as they regard it as a temporary residence. Their emphasis lies in the interior living conditions as they refurbish their apartments when they move in.

Most of the jiaoyufiers share the same prominent characteristics: 30-45 years old, well educated, high salary jobs, with children in primary schools or kindergarten. 70% of the jiaoyufiers have bachelor or higher degrees. These gentrifiers possess cultural capital which strongly influence their devotion to their children’s education. They are more concerned with the right of enrollment in the key school than with matters of taste in housing, which distinguishes them from other gentrifier groups.

Similar to the displacement of working class by an affluent class caused by gentrification, jiaoyufication has impacts on the social structure of the neighborhood. The well-paid class, most of whom are corporate managers, entrepreneurs, and technicians, displaces the previous underclass including retirees and low-paid workers who do not have children or whose children have graduated from school. Not willing to tolerate the poor living conditions, the former residents choose to sell their apartments for benefit and purchase comfortable houses in other locations. The residential replacement by the jiaoyufiers also occurs in gentrification. There is nearly only a single reason to live here: for their children’s education. (Figure 5) Apart from that, encouraged by the poor living conditions and the profits in selling, 76% of the families choose to sell their apartments after their children graduate from school and move out within a short period of time (three to six years), quickly replaced by another family with similar social status in a process that bears some similarities to studentification. (Figure 6) (Smith, 2005)
The social-spatial impacts of jiaoyufication

Similar to mainstream gentrification, jiaoyufication invigorates the neighborhood, changes the aging tendency of the inner city, and elevates the community culture with young parents moving in, however, it also has negative consequences.

Jiaoyufication results in an unbalanced supply of public service. It influences the change of demographic distribution thus influencing demand-supply of public service, especially the management of compulsory education schools. With the relocation of the middle class, jiaoyufication leads to the reduction of demand for compulsory education in the previous residential area where jiaoyufiers move from. (Chen, 2015) Therefore, the aboriginal residence may merge schools due to fewer students. Another impact is the challenge of land use planning for education. The acceleration of changes in the population distribution caused by jiaoyufication in school districts makes it difficult to correctly predict the supply scale of public service facilities in the planning and then affects the allocation of the services, especially in the construction of kindergartens, primary schools, and junior high schools. Consequently, jiaoyufication brings more uncertain factors to the supply of microscale public service facilities in urban planning.

Jiaoyufication also causes differentiation of social space. Under Jiaoyufication, the social space in the school districts gradually evolves from a relatively homogeneous and stable space to heterogeneity by "intrusion" and "isolation". The increase of jiaoyufiers and the displacement of aboriginal residents greatly change the characteristics of the social space of the community whose main feature is the emergence of the differentiation between rich and poor. Jiaoyufiers are characterized by higher economic capital, whose increase will inevitably have an impact on the social structure and stratification of the original settlement. For example, there are prominent differences in income, occupation, education and lifestyles between the “intruders” -- jiaoyufiers and the existing residents left behind. The former generally have higher incomes and are engaged in white-collar occupations with greater demand for apparel consumption, housekeeping services, and leisure facilities etc. Although some of the aboriginal residents wish to relocate, it is difficult for them to obtain sufficient capital to relocate through resale due to their apartments’ small sizes. This kind of social-spatial differentiation affects the daily social interaction and perception between jiaoyufiers and aboriginal residents. In the survey, nearly 80% jiaoyufiers indicate that they seldom talk or engage in any activity with the aboriginal residents. Although they share the same living environments, there may be class stratification between jiaoyufiers and the aboriginal residents, while the former can bring destructive and disintegrative effects on the latter’s social networks, weakening their social capital and sense of community belonging.

Jiaoyufication shapes territory space. Territoriality refers to the expression of the geographical or spatial social power as well as the means of spatial and social interaction. Territorial Action includes three essential features: (1) division of the region (2) space signs such as boundaries; (3) enforced accessible rules. (Sack, 1986) The school catchment area meets the above three essential features of territoriality as it exemplifies a specific division of residential areas with a clear exclusionary boundary and is authorized by the government to ensure accessibility. Resembling a gated community, it is a continuation of the privilege-based territoriality in the era of planned
the school catchment area constructs the space of territoriality and reshapes the urban social space.

Conclusion

Jiaoyufication, or education-lead gentrification, is a new inner city social-spatial phenomenon and genre of gentrification resulting from the integration of China's education and commercial housing practices. It has distinctive characteristics and exerts social-spatial consequences on the locality, mostly in negative ways by differentiating social space and shaping territory space. Similar evidence has been found in Arizona, USA and Vancouver, Canada. (Wu, 2015) Future research will ascertain whether jiaoyuficaion is an emergent from of gentrification globally and what it will bring to inner city areas in the long run.

References


