The Price of Cosmopolitanism: Globalization, Class Structure, and Language Endangerment in Shanghai

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The Price of Cosmopolitanism:
Globalization, Class Structure, and Language Endangerment in Shanghai

By Fang Xu

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

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By Fang Xu

Advisor: Dr. Sharon Zukin

Over the last two decades, Shanghai has experienced an unprecedented transformation, as China’s economic globalization and urban expansion have increased rapidly. Looking beyond statistics and architectural spectacles, I examine a seemingly personal choice in Shanghai, speaking Putonghua Mandarin, the official language, or the Shanghai dialect. This study contextualizes the contested urban linguistic space, and illustrates the political, social, and cultural conditions in this China’s globalizing city.

Through archival research, fifty in-depth interviews, two hundred and fifty survey questionnaires, and ethnographic fieldwork in Shanghai in the fall and winter of 2013, I document the impact of three sets of state policies driving the Shanghai dialect to the brink of extinction, and reactions of Shanghairen (Shanghai people) to preserve their linguistic heritage, and to safeguard their place-bound identity. First, state language policies systematically put Shanghai dialect at a discriminated position, through a nationalist agenda associating the official language with patriotism, and upward social mobility. In response to this state-sponsored language oppression, a grassroots dialect preservation movements struggles to protect Shanghai’s linguistic heritage.

Second, urban redevelopment policies to accommodate the infrastructure demanded by a global city displaced more than one million Shanghai households out of the urban center. It not only deprives them of the urban central residency, challenges their claim to urban public space,
but also disperses the Shanghai dialect community. Facing an urban built environment bearing little relevance to Shanghai’s history and long-time residents, Shanghairen rejects newly-built architectural spectacles and articulates an alternative image of cosmopolitan Shanghai located in the historical urban center.

The third reason behind the rapid decline of Shanghai dialect speaking is the influx of millions of internal migrants, and the selective social integration of these non-speakers in Shanghai after reforms of the household registration (hukou) system. Instead of a dual society characterized by those with a Shanghai urban hukou and those without, my study suggests a more nuanced social class restructuring. On the one hand, migrants now have better overall chances for social acceptance and integration as institutional barriers represented by an individual’s hukou status have receded; on the other hand, social and cultural boundaries are effectively maintained through language and lifestyle. Only those highly educated and wealthy newcomers are accepted on the job market and in social circles, while less-educated rural migrants are excluded.

To synthesize, in exchange for Shanghai’s global city status and improved standard of living, Shanghairen have been relocated away from the urban center, while their linguistic right to the city is threatened. They have also experienced relative deprivation of privileges in terms of exclusive access to employment and top quality social services. In this study, they come together to tell a story of the price locals pay when an authoritarian, centralized state fashions a city compatible with and competitive for globalization.
Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the love and support from my family. My mom, and my boyfriend have always provided encouragement to keep me on track over the overwhelming fieldwork, and lonely writing phases. My friends in the United States, Canada, and especially those back in Shanghai have always been supportive, and reminded me of why I devote my doctorate work to my mother tongue and my home city.

It took roughly three years for my research and dissertation to come into shape. Through all of their forms and drafts, Sharon Zukin, my dissertation advisor, has provided sage guidance, thoughtful feedback, and sharp critiques. She has pushed me to produce important, practical, and insightful research. This work would also not have been possible without Philip Kasinitz, who read through all my first drafts, and has provided me with unique perspective to structure the dissertation when I was lost in the details. I am also grateful to Jillian Cavanaugh, whose expertise in linguistic anthropology has opened up an entirely new field for me, and she has helped me greatly to navigate the said field in positioning my research. Thank as well to Xiangming Chen for his support throughout the research and writing of the dissertation.

I would also like to thank a number of Graduate Center peers and research informants in Shanghai who helped shape my research and dissertation. Thanks to fellow Ph.D. students under Sharon Zukin’s supervision for being the sounding board and providing consistent support for me to complete the dissertation in a timely manner. I appreciate that Jinjin shared with me her photos of public space in Shanghai, which supplement my observation data. Lastly, I am grateful for the financial support from various Graduate Center grants and the dissertation fellowship, as well as the Write-up Grant from the Foundation of Urban and Regional Studies at the Oxford University.
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Introduction

To celebrate International Mother Language Day on February 21st, 2014, Shanghai online news outlet Kankanews interviewed Xu Haoliang, an Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations and Director of the United Nations Development Programme in Asia and the Pacific.  

A Shanghai native, as well as a UN official overseeing regional development, he commented on the importance of linguistic diversity, and in particular, the importance of preserving regional dialects. In his remarks, which he delivered in Shanghai dialect, he commented:

If everyone in China speaks Putonghua, it would mean the disappearance of diversities, of regional cultures in the country. If in twenty years or so, I go back to Shanghai to live, it would be odd to hear Putonghua everywhere, which is not the environment I am familiar with, or grew up in. I mean, regional dialects and cultures everywhere should be protected and preserved.

Xu Haoliang chuckled when describing the ‘unimaginable’ scenario of hearing Putonghua, or Standard Mandarin Chinese, spoken everywhere on the streets of Shanghai. But it is probable that he had not returned to Shanghai in some time as his unthinkable scenario has already happened by the time of the interview. Shanghai now faces a crisis of native language endangerment. At the core of this crisis is a struggle between local identity, the authoritarian state, and globalization.

I understand Xu Haoliang's anxiety about the loss of Shanghai dialect and with it, the loss of the city. As a native Shanghainese, I lived in Shanghai until the age of 26, and have experienced displacement from the urban center to the periphery in 2005. Leaving China for North America in 2006, I was not fully aware of the linguistic and cultural impact of urban transformations in Shanghai until going back for field research in 2009, and 2013. Today, on the streets of Shanghai,

Putonghua is heard everywhere. This momentous change reflects three sets of state policies: language standardization, urban redevelopment, and internal migration. In Xu Haoliang’s words, the linguistic change renders Shanghai unfamiliar and alien to native Shanghai people. His comments make clear that cultural and linguistic diversity should not be sacrificed for the sake of any official goal, not even economic development.

In this dissertation, I critically examine how public policies came together to create Xu's "unthinkable scenario." I explore three dimensions of urban change in Shanghai: what is the current composition of urban population in Shanghai? Which language(s) do they speak in public? And in what kind of urban built environment do they speak these languages. The first dimension of Shanghai’s transformation is the recent change in population; local Shanghai people, who have lived in Shanghai for two to three generations, have seen the massive influx of internal migrants from other parts of the country. Second, the city’s unique urban lingua franca has been replaced by Putonghua, as the state has pushed for a standardized official language, at the expense of regional dialects. Third, the urban built environment was dramatically transformed, from old, familiar alleyway housing and narrow streets lined by sycamore trees to new, indistinguishable glass-façade skyscrapers and elevated expressways. In this work, I illustrate a battle lost by highly educated, middle class Shanghai people in multiple dimensions, as their home city becomes a global city.

To capture these dimensions of social transformation, I looked beyond statistics of economic achievement, beyond the grandeur of the skyscrapers on both sides of the Huangpu River, and beyond the neon lights, to investigate the fate of the Shanghai dialect in global city building. The dialect is a hybrid tongue that evolved from the ancient Wu linguistic family’s Songjiang

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2 I will examine the multi-layered and contested conceptualization of “Shanghai people” in detail in chapter five.
County branch in the early 20th century. It became the lingua franca of Shanghai, adopted and enriched by countless migrants who settled in this cosmopolitan metropolis over the course of more than a century, and who called themselves Shanghairen.

Since China’s economic reform reached Shanghai in the 1990s, transformations in Shanghairen’s lives have been documented mostly around the grievances of displacement. Yet the fact is that their lives have been affected more than in housing conditions. The change has come in multiple ways: language, social mobility, social circles, and finally, even Shanghairen identity. By documenting the transformation of the city beyond the urban built environment, I highlight the domination of new national political and economic elites in Shanghai, the marginalization of native Shanghairen socially and culturally, and the impact of developmental strategies of the authoritarian state in building Shanghai into a global city.

This is not a study about the Shanghai dialect itself; rather, I use the endangerment of the dialect as a lens to understand the urban changes in Shanghai. As Milroy and Milroy assert “it does not seem possible to account fully for linguistic change without inquiring into the social origins and social mechanisms of change” (1985:55). In this context, the decline of speaking Shanghai dialect does not take place in a social vacuum: rather, it is the changing social circumstances that prompt and explain the endangerment. Conversely, the dialect endangerment provides a comprehensive view of the dynamic social landscape. Changes in linguistic practices surrounding the use of Shanghai dialect show the many ways in which the globalizing city has transformed the lives of Shanghairen.

From changes in linguistic practices, I demonstrate how the social construction of a hegemonic, monolithic national identity can crush vernacular language practices and local identities. From Shanghairen’s attachment to the urban central neighborhoods on the west bank of
the Huangpu River, I show the disorientation, alienation, and marginalization they experience through the waves of urban redevelopments that have altered the city beyond recognition. And from voluntary and involuntary adoption of Putonghua at home and in public among Shanghairen, I explore changes in migration policies, and the selective social integration of highly educated and better-off non-speakers of Shanghai dialect into middle class Shanghairen’s social circles and families.

Furthermore, since the disbursement of social services has not kept pace with the growing migrant population, native Shanghairen feel relative deprivation compared to what they have expected based on the city’s rising prosperity. This in turn triggers hostility between Shanghairen and recent migrants. In those conflicts, the responsibility falls on the Shanghai dialect to identify who counts as a Shanghairen, and what resources, services, and prestige one is entitled to, factually and nominally. In the end, changes and conflicts surrounding the Shanghai dialect are byproducts of the unequal economic development in the region, the redistribution system in transition from a planned to a market-based mode, and a nationalist agenda that imposes a standardized linguistic culture and a homogenous national identity. In this period of rapid growth, as China rises to become the world’s largest economy, the state has built Shanghai as its flagship, to show its ambition (Campanella, 2008:58).

These issues are not limited to China. Megacities in less developed countries are growing and globalizing rapidly. Beyond GDP percentages, population size, and the speed of urbanization, my examination of micro urban dynamics and practices in Shanghai provides a bottom-up view of the impact of global city building in an authoritarian state on locals’ everyday life. Qualitative urban studies like this dissertation stand at the frontier of research on megacities in the developing world, and the case of Shanghai will contribute to the theorization of urban conditions in the so-
called Global South, in regions where recent migrants and longtime urban residents come from different ethnic origins and speak different languages; and especially as China’s economic success inspires leadership in other developing countries to engage in global city building.

**Linguistic and Social Background**

The three main social and cultural contexts of this dissertation are: the modern Chinese language situation, class structure in the pre-economic reform era, and Shanghai undergoing globalization. First I will distinguish literary and vernacular Chinese, and explain the linguistic diversity in China. This serves as a background for understanding the tension between the official language and the Shanghai dialect. A brief explanation of social stratification in the pre-economic reform era will follow. More than merely serving as a point for comparison, the importance of birthplace for categorizing social groups will help us understand the sense of loss and relative deprivation among Shanghairen in current times. Lastly, I will review studies on Shanghai’s recent economic and cultural participation in globalization. My qualitative examination of the changing social dynamics and language practices in Shanghai fills the gap in earlier studies’ largely quantitative illustration of Shanghai’s urban transformation.

**Literary and Vernacular Chinese**

The Chinese language through the early 20th century appears to be a typical case of “diglossia” system, in which its literary and vernacular forms coexist, and have distinctive functions that rarely overlap (Ferguson 1959:328, 337-38). Literary Chinese is the so-called High Language used in court or other formal situations, and vernacular Chinese is the so-called Low Language used in everyday conversation. From this perspective, scholars studying the modern
Chinese language argue that by taking over the functions of vernacular dialects, the standardized official language, Putonghua, as the High Language, drives regional dialects to endangerment.

The two forms of Chinese language have coexisted for millennia and diverged since ancient times. Snow points out that literary Chinese is “a classical written language that was learned in school by those fortunate enough to have the chance for education,” and was “not spoken by anyone as a native language” (2010:160). Rooted in canonical writings of the Warring States (403-255 BC), literary Chinese has been “the pre-eminent language for writing in China for the past two thousand years” (Fuller, 2004:1). Throughout this period, literati “continued to model their prose on this early literary language, and the written languages began to take on an archaic aspect as the spoken language underwent a very different and by and large independent development” (Norman, 1988:83). Yet even though every literate person was trained to write in the rigid style of the ancient writers until the early 20th century, they resorted to their varied native tongues in speaking (Ramsey, 1989:4).

Regional vernaculars of the modern Chinese language are roughly divided into two groups. The northern varieties, conventionally known in English as the “Mandarin dialects”, were based on the educated speech in Beijing with regional accents since the fifteenth century. Varieties of Mandarin dialects cover more than three quarters of the Chinese language region, while southern regional vernaculars, so-called “non-Mandarin dialects” such as Cantonese, Hakka, or Shanghai dialect, occupy only the southeast coastal regions. More importantly, the Mandarin dialects are more or less mutually intelligible; but the non-Mandarin dialects differ greatly from each other, and from any variation of Mandarin; for example, there are five phonetically distinguishable tones in Shanghai dialect, and nine in Cantonese. The Shanghai dialect also has a series of voiced consonants b, d, g that Mandarin does not have (Ramsey, 1989:21).
These vast differences between literary and vernacular Chinese, and between Mandarin and non-Mandarin dialects, meant that the replacement of the diglossia system with a Beijing-pronunciation based official language, serving both High and Low functions, was most painfully felt in non-Mandarin dialect regions. The diglossia system was eroded when both a national language (guoyu, 国语) and national pronunciation (guoyin, 国音) were created and promoted in the early 20th century, when the Kuomintang Party ruled the Republic of China. The victory of the Chinese Communist Party over Kuomintang, and the founding of the People’s Republic of China, introduced more thorough measures to replace the diglossia system.

The new official language, Putonghua—literally meaning common tongue—inherited the Beijing-pronunciation based guoyin. It was promoted through the national school system and state-owned mass media. The once separate functions and domains of literary and vernacular Chinese were further muddled and merged. Unlike Mandarin dialect speakers, non-Mandarin dialect speakers, such as Shanghairen, were forced to adopt a new spoken language in their daily lives. At the surface, this standardized and unified spoken language system simplified linguistic practice for non-Mandarin dialect speakers, who no longer had to “translate” written Chinese into vernaculars; for example, the word “clothes” written as 衣服, and pronounced as yi fu in Putonghua, but yi zang in the Shanghai dialect, which corresponds to the archaic word 衣裳 (yi shang).

However, this convenience championed by state language policy in essence surrendered the linguistic space once occupied by regional vernaculars to Putonghua. Besides the dominance of High Language in education and mass media in a diglossia community, Li points out the presence of large amount of native High Language speakers—native speakers of Mandarin variations, that also contributes to the encroachment of the High Language upon territories previously occupied by the Low language (2014:71). Using Putonghua as both written and spoken
language eliminates a functional separation in non-Mandarin dialect regions. The end result of the erosion of diglossia system is usually that the Low Language loses ground, driven out by younger generations educated in the more prestigious and economically more viable High Language (Hudson, 2002:30).

The endangerment of the Shanghai dialect documented in this study is one recent example of the battles lost by a Low Language to a state-backed High Language. As Fishman points out, the High Language is “the language with stronger rewards and sanctions associated with it” (1980:8; 1985:45), and as such, has a better chance to win out. The rewards are more attainable and tangible in the economic reform era, when upward social mobility can be achieved through education and in the job market, rather than being pre-determined by one’s birthplace or family’s political background.

Social Stratification in the Pre-reform Era (1949-1978)

Social stratification in pre-reform era China was largely characterized by uneven regional development favoring coastal urban areas, and was closely related to the household registration \( (hukou) \) system, a kind of personal identification system, necessary for receiving any social services in the planned economy. The \( hukou \) system was implemented in the late 1950s, and divided Chinese citizens into two unequal tiers—the privileged urban and the underprivileged rural (see for example, Christiansen, 1992; Cheng & Selden, 1994).

The \( hukou \) system was designed to directly regulate population mobility and control access to state-provided welfare benefits and opportunities. First, \( hukou \) registration allocated people into

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agrarian and non-agrarian (urban) categories based on birthplace, and then over time, became increasingly lopsided, and favored urban areas in the redistribution system in terms of food supply, education, healthcare, and wages. The *hukou* system is one of the major tools of social control employed by the state, and individual’s *hukou* status serves as ascribed status significantly affecting the personal life of individuals across the social spectrum (Chan & Zhang, 1999: 818-19).

Furthermore, there existed hierarchy among urban *hukous*, which meant that the higher the administrative level of the city, the more opportunities and resources were granted to an individual whose *hukou* belonged to that particular city (Lu, 2008). Shanghai is one of the three top-tier municipalities directly controlled by the central government, enjoying the same rank as provinces of administrative divisions of China. Thus, a Shanghai urban *hukou* granted the holder access to top-tier education, healthcare, and job opportunities.

The location of an individual’s *hukou* is the first of four structural and behavioral dimensions that Bian identifies in pre-reform stratification, which is the rural-urban divide in residential status (2002). The second is what he calls state-collective dualism in economic structure: state workers, the majority of urban labor force, hold “iron rice bowls” of lifelong employment, insurance, welfare benefits, and pension, which are unavailable to either urban or rural collective workers. In state-owned *danwei* (work units), earnings were redistributed to individuals according to a politically defined and seniority ranked bureaucratic system (Bian & Logan, 1996; Walder, 1989). Work units themselves are ranked as well, determined by the administrative level of the government jurisdictions they belong to, which range from central ministries, to provincial and municipal bureaus, to city district offices. The higher the rank of the

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4 The other two are Beijing and Tianjin. And in 1997, Chongqing, located in the Sichuan Province in southwestern China was granted this status, increasing the number of top tiered municipalities to four.
danwei, the greater the bureaucratic power its cadres have, and the greater the benefits it can offer its workers.

Due to deliberate “de-stratification” policies, income differences among social groups and occupations were extremely low in the pre-reform era. Many economic rewards took the form of redistributive benefits, such as public housing, healthcare, and other social services provided by danwei to workers. An individual’s economic rewards varied more based on these redistributive benefits, associated with the type of workplace, than on income differences associated with individual attributes such as education and political position (Zhou, Tuma & Moen, 1997). However, this does not mean that political background was irrelevant in the pre-reform era.

The third dimension of social stratification in the pre-reform era that Bian points out is the cadre-worker dichotomy in occupation classification. In that era, party membership was a significant predictor of occupational status in state-owned danwei (Walder, 1989). State cadres occupied prestigious managerial and professional jobs with above-average compensation packages, and were kept in reserve for training and promotion into party leadership positions (Bian, 2002). Though workers could obtain a relatively high occupational status through technical skill level and seniority, gaining promotion from worker to cadre was very rare. It was an achieved status excluding the majority of less-educated workers.

The fourth dimension, according to Bian, is the “revolution-antirevolution” split in political characterization (2002). During the Maoist era, the “revolution” or “red” classes were of so-called proletarian background: peasants, urban poor, and the working class. The “anti-revolution,” or “black” class was of bourgeois background, such as previous landlords, business owners, and intellectuals. These were not entirely fixed categories, such as birthplace, but a mixture of family class origin and an individual’s political performances in numerous party-led campaigns.
The four dimensions of social stratification in the pre-reform era can be illustrated using the example of an individual at the top of the hierarchy: a senior Shanghai urban-hukou Chinese Communist Party cadre from a proletarian background working for a danwei controlled by a central ministry. All forms of stratification are present, and the benefits he received would be of a top tier that few others were able to attain. The redistributive economy and hukou system created rigid social categories, institutionalized social inequality, and allowed extremely limited opportunities for geographical and socioeconomic mobility. Structurally, that social stratification system also established the tremendous desirability of an urban hukou, especially in Shanghai. A city was once famed “Paris of the East” in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, and in the economic reform era, is on the rise to be a global city (Sassen, 2009).

Globalizing Shanghai

Shanghai is one of the most studied Chinese cities for understanding early 20\textsuperscript{th} century Chinese history, that scholars tirelessly remind readers of the city’s past glory in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century as the “Paris of the East” (see for example Bergère, 2009; Lee, 1999; Lu, 1999; Yeh, 2008). Shanghai is also the epitome of contemporary Chinese urban conditions, as Chen puts it “Shanghai is a timely urban laboratory for understanding how local transformations occur in global or globalizing cities as a combined function of global impact and state power” (2009:xx). Over the last two decades, studies on Shanghai have examined multiple dimensions of the globalization process, from economic achievement, urban redevelopments, proliferation of Western consumer goods, to influx of foreign and domestic talents. In the following, I will examine these four aspects in turn.
Shanghai is a latecomer in terms of participation in economic reform and state-led globalization. It was not until the 1990s that economic reform reached Shanghai; its goal was to “re-create the city as a cosmopolitan, world financial, and commercial center” (Gamble, 2003: x). Zhu Rongji, former mayor of Shanghai and later China’s premier, described “Shanghai as China’s New York City” in his speech given at the Economic Club of New York over his visit to the United States in April, 1999. Contrary to the previously designated role as a domestic industrial producer at the heart of China’s centrally planned, socialist economy, Shanghai at the turn of the millennium was ready to embrace the status of a global city.

Statistics about Shanghai’s economic achievements demonstrate the city’s participation in a network of global cities in terms of concentration of professionals, tertiary sectors, and Fortune 500 companies’ regional headquarters. Out of the 500 largest foreign-funded industrial corporations in China in 1995, 69 were located in Shanghai, with 35 in Tianjin trailing far back in second place (Zhou, 2002:65). By the end of 1996, over 16,000 foreign-funded enterprises produced 34 percent of Shanghai’s industrial output. By early 2000, over half the world’s largest 500 companies had established operations in Shanghai (Gamble, 2003: xi). Chen writes that “fifty-five multinational companies set up regional headquarters in Shanghai after 2003; … more specifically, three business groups under General Electric moved their Asia-Pacific regional headquarters from Hong Kong and other Asian cities to Shanghai” (2009:xix).

Other than regional headquarters, the emphasis on the transition from manufacturing to tertiary sector industries in the Chinese state-led global city building process has attracted more foreign enterprises to set up research and development centers in Shanghai. In 2005, among the more than 700 foreign R&D firms established in China, 23 percent were located in Shanghai (Wang & Du, 2007). Wu and Gaubatz point out that the significance of Shanghai to global
investors, compared to other Chinese or East Asian cities, is that “based on market capitalization, the Shanghai Stock Exchange is the fifth largest in the world. The sentiment among business watchers surveyed for the Global Financial Centers Index clearly favor Shanghai, ahead of Singapore and Hong Kong” (2013:125). China’s central government is working to position Shanghai as the country’s leading financial center by 2020 (Yusuf & Nabeshima, 2010).

Those numbers, showing the quick pace of Shanghai’s economic globalization since the 1990s, explain the need for updating urban infrastructure and for urban expansion, because the city needed to be made physically capable of achieving global city status. The transformation of the urban built environment is the second aspect of globalization in Shanghai, which made the former premier Zhu Ruiji’s analogy between Shanghai and New York City most visible and relevant. There were virtually no modern high-rise office towers or expressways in Shanghai until the late 1980s, but by the early 2000s, Shanghai had twice as many skyscrapers as New York City, and three times the number of expressways that Robert Moses built in the New York metropolitan region (Campanella, 2008: 15-6).

Visually, globalization is characterized by architectural designs from international architectural firms, as well as an indistinguishable, modern look of urban built environment (Ren, 2009:9). Standing next door to the Shanghai Municipal Government’s building at the center of the People’s Square in the west bank of Shanghai, is the Shanghai Grand Theatre. Opened to public in 1998, it was designed by a famous architecture design company founded by French architect Jean-Marie Charpentier. On the east bank, architectural spectacles such as the Shanghai Tower, were designed by the American architectural firm Gensler. It is currently the tallest building in China and the second-tallest in the world.
Looking down from those skyscrapers, we see an urban landscape bearing little vernacular characters, formed by two decades of massive demolition of old landmarks and residential neighborhoods. The unprecedented scale of the urban transformation in Shanghai since the early 1990s resulted in scholars like Lu Hanchao proclaiming that “[b]y the late 1990s, much of the city had been literally destroyed” (2002:172). Large-scale redevelopment projects demolished most of the city’s central residential neighborhoods, which contained many varied examples of vernacular architecture, rooted in the late 19th century semi-colonial Shanghai. Besides the erasure of distinct features inherited from the past, Wang Xiaoming observes that this building frenzy is also part of a standardization process of Shanghai’s urban space, one that tends to match a vision of an imagined “international metropolis” (2010:24). In place of the old central alleyway housing neighborhoods, arose glass-façade skyscrapers, elevated inner-city expressways, shopping centers carrying transnational fashion brands, and a brand new subway system with gleaming marble platforms and spotless stations.

These building forms are transplanted from elsewhere to project an “imagined” global image (King & Kusno, 2000). As representations of capitalist globalization, these typical urban architectural forms can be found almost anywhere in the world, and are venues that transcend differences between geographical, ethnic, and cultural communities in the practices of consumption (Sklair, 2010:138-39). Once the backbone of China’s industrial production, Shanghai has been turned into a city devoted to capitalist consumerism. The most ironic example of Shanghai’s embrace of this form of globalization, in terms of consumerist space, is Xintiandi. Located next to the birthplace of the Chinese Communist Party, Xintiandi is a prototypical upscale shopping and office complex, one of the many that resulted from the global urban growth coalition (He & Wu, 2007; Ren, 2008).
Consumerism, and the abundance of consumer goods, is the third aspect of globalization in Shanghai, separate from the ration system and sea of blue and grey Mao suits. By late 1999, over 40 foreign brands had set up chain stores in Shanghai, such as the Hong Kong retailer Sincere, Carrefour of France, Chia Tai of Thailand and IKEA of Sweden (Gamble, 2003:142). Global luxury and fast fashion brands such as Louis Vuitton, Hermès, Prada, Zara, and H&M line the Huaihai Road and Nanjing West Road, two major thoroughfares in Shanghai. Access to Western consumer goods, to a certain extent, extends to Western cultural products. Side by side with Western popular culture—fashion magazines, TV shows and Hollywood movies, Western high culture, defined as “high-standard, elegant arts” (gao ya yishu) in governmental and state-owned mass media’s narratives, has been strategically promoted in Shanghai. Considering the rigid censorship of Western culture during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), the municipal government’s financial support of the construction of cultural venues such as the Shanghai Grand Theatre, and to the organization of performances of Western classical music, ballet, or opera indicates an eagerness to promote consumption of global culture (Xu, 2013).

While global capitalism mobilizes commercial resources in globalizing urban commercial space, members of the transnational capitalist class act like agents (Sklair, 2010:141). Among these agents that Sklair identifies, major transnational corporate owners and executives and their local affiliates, globalizing professionals, and merchants play significant roles in brokering and facilitating the prevalence of capitalist consumerism in Shanghai. Compared to the so-called “floating population,” those who recently migrated to cities from rural or small town China and work manual labor jobs at the bottom of socioeconomic hierarchy, the transnational capitalist class is a much smaller population in Shanghai. However, they are capable of wielding great power in
the local economic, social and cultural realms. Through studies on this latter group, I illustrate the fourth and last aspect of globalization in Shanghai.

Members of this group of non-natives are the returning Chinese expatriates who have been educated abroad. Many of them are hired by foreign corporations for managerial positions or higher, in recognition of their English language skills and familiarity with Western corporate culture. According to Aihwa Ong, among these there are also “cultural entrepreneurs who selectively deploy business management in combination with cultural forms in an individualistic, instrumental manner” (2006:221). They are brokers of Western consumerism, through their own businesses in the fashion, art, and culinary industries. Together with their highly educated domestic counterparts, they make up the solid base for urban China’s new middle/upper-middle class, who are globally oriented and expect their living and working environments to resemble other global cities.

Shanghai, after more than a decade of concentrated foreign direct investments, large-scale urban redevelopments, embrace of capitalist consumerism, and influx of transnational capitalist class and domestic labor force, has regained its pre-1949 cosmopolitan reputation. The city’s pre-1949 glories were rediscovered and memorialized in the official rhetoric, to encourage great changes in Shanghai in the early 1990s. This nostalgia for the past served to justify the city’s ambition, or rather China’s ambition, to participate in globalization, and to play a larger role in the global economy, other than as a huge, notorious sweatshop. China aimed to build Shanghai because a “global city is a national means of ‘plugging in’ to global political, economic and social networks” (Bunnel, 2002: 287).

To grasp the “plugging-in” Shanghai to the global network, orchestrated by the state, I examine a less visible field of the globalization process, the endangerment of the Shanghai dialect.
What is unique about this study is that the language is not indigenous or rural, but modern and urban. It was the lingua franca of a cosmopolitan metropolis a century ago, but is losing ground as the city regains its global city status in current times. The literature studying the endangerment or loss of regional dialects are seldom about a language native to a modern metropolis. Rather, they are centered on historically rooted, authentic, and indigenous claims and identities confronting national or global forces.

Writers on global cities rarely touch on the suppressed local and urban linguistic heritage because those cities are likely to be the political, economic, and cultural center of the country, for example, London, Paris, and Tokyo. National elites concentrated in those capital cities have the means to translate their dominance in other realms to the linguistic realm, establishing the hegemony of the language of the capital through institutions across the country. We do not need to look far to recognize that Putonghua, China’s official language, is based on the Beijing pronunciation. Shanghai, even as it grows to global city scale, is not the political or cultural center of China. It is a city ruled by delegates appointed by the central state in Beijing, and controlled largely by a transnational capitalist class speaking English, and national elites speaking Putonghua.

On the concept of global city, Sassen acknowledges that the state remains a powerful actor in any global or globalizing city, mediating forces and local responses, even though transnational financial and social forces permeating national borders and setting up global networks (2006). Indeed, the fast-paced global city building process in Shanghai is attributed to the Chinese Communist Party’s sweeping state power. That is to say, it is the state’s will and national wealth that have arranged and orchestrated the globalization of Shanghai. As a result, the city first and foremost serves to represent the country on the global stage, rather than stressing its vernacular

5 Barcelona in Woolard’s 1989 study can be considered an exception, though the scale of Barcelona in terms of participation in economic globalization, population size, and urban landscape is not at the same level of Shanghai.
characteristics and its connectedness with other global cities. By design, Shanghai’s achievement and significance point inward, to the rest of the country, and that’s why the state needs to make sure, though channeling global economic and cultural influence, the voice of this global city is essentially national, rather than local.

**Analytical Framework**

To interpret the social dynamics produced by and in response to state power in a globalizing city, I situate my critical analysis on concepts of language ideology, right to the city, and nationalism. Converging in this study, they explain my findings and illustrate the changing face of Shanghai and the losing battle of the locals in the state-led globalization process.

**Language Ideology and Linguistic Capital**

My analysis of social conflicts surrounding language choice in this study, specifically the rising preference for Putonghua Mandarin over Shanghai dialect, is anchored by the linguistic anthropological concept of language ideology. It is in this analytical framework that I examine the Chinese Communist Party’s state policy that institutionalizes the dominance of the official language Putonghua, the marginalization of the Shanghai dialect, and bilingual Shanghairen’s language practices.

Silverstein highlights the subjective role of language users by defining linguistic ideologies as “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (1979:193). Irvine underlines the social dimension in Silverstein’s definition by pointing out that language ideology is “the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests”
That is to say, language ideologies are by definition always multiple, omnipresent, and held by diverse speakers to a varied degree to aid the understanding of their social world. Extending the significance of the concept of language ideology beyond users of a particular language in examining social dynamics, Irvine and Gal highlight that language ideologies “are ideas with which participants and observers frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them” (2000:35). It means that both non-speakers and not practicing a particular language have important meanings in social encounters as well.

In cases similar to my study, which involves a dominant language ideology, and an alternative one, represented by Shanghai dialect preservation activists, language ideology is employed to present a dichotomy, differentiating between different languages and the social groups associated with them. Dorian generalizes from various studies on endangered languages about how language ideology usually assigns meanings and status, that “the standard language is typically considered a rich, precise, rationally organized and rationally organizing instrument; dialects and ethnic minority languages, by contrast, are considered impoverished and crude, most likely inadequate to organize the subordinate world itself and certainly inadequate to organize other worlds” (1999:8). From her study on Catalan-speakers in Barcelona, against the backdrop of Castilian Spanish being the country’s official language, Woolard identifies “two competing social dimensions of language use: on the one hand is power, prestige, dominance, status, and on the other hand, covert prestige, solidarity” (1985:739). Other studies in Western Europe, such as Jaffe’s study on Corsican under the French state’s language ideology and linguistic policies (1999), or Cavanaugh’s study on the struggles of Bergamasco (2009), a northern Italian dialect, exemplify the power dynamics inherent within language practices and the varied degrees of acceptance of
the state’s language ideology. In these cases, the dominant language ideology associates the country’s official language with power, prestige, and higher status; the regional dialects become associated with lower status. Meanwhile, among speakers of those endangered languages or regional dialects, another language ideology bestows vernaculars with covert prestige to ensure that it remains relevant and alive.

The language ideology produced and sponsored by the state serves its social function in two ways, that Woolard calls aspects of linguistic hegemony, which are “knowledge or control of a standard, and acknowledgement or recognition of it; or in empirical sociolinguistic terms, behavioral proficiency and attitudes” (1985:741). Plainly, it means that in everyday encounters, linguistic competency of the official language asserts undisputable power, power granted by the state-produced language ideology, which is accepted by speakers of the official language and their audience.

The modern national education system plays an important role in maintaining and reproducing the state’s language ideology, hence, the dominance of the official language, through codification in dictionaries and grammar books (e.g. Bourdieu, 1991; Gumperz, 1962:45; Milroy & Milroy, 1985:58) or access to higher education, for example, as Mixal’chenko (1994:181) points out, that during the Soviet regime, one could receive higher education only in Russian. Huang presents a case of the ramification of the state’s language ideology when language proficiency is associated with educational level and socioeconomic status in Taiwan (2009). In his study, the participants perceive, the official language, Mandarin, as associated with young, elegant, white-collar urbanites, whereas dialects are spoken by old, vulgar, blue-collar, rural folks (Huang, 2009:8-10).
However, this dichotomy, produced by the state’s language ideology, is only half of the story, because vernacular usage connotes local solidarity and covert prestige, acknowledged and honored by its speakers. This alternative language ideology serves as an important symbol of group cohesion and exclusive identity, as Milroy and Milroy reveal in their study on Singaporeans (1985).\(^6\) Milroy and Milroy find a paradox in their study, namely, that Singaporeans view standard British English as connoting a higher status as the “ideal” form of English, but at the same time, they practice Singaporean English to distance themselves from Englishmen (1985:109). Local resistance against dominant language ideology in Singapore has a political, post-colonial tone, while in other cases, the socioeconomic strength of dialect speakers supports the alternative language ideology regionally, such as in the case of Catalan (Woolard, 1982). By examining the economic structure in Catalonia, Woolard points out although Castilian Spanish is imposed by the state, local Catalans in general fare better socioeconomically than Castilian-speaking migrants (1985:742), and thus lays the economic foundation for the higher status of Catalan locally. Besides the political and economic circumstances prompted by the status of dialects, Labov points out the racial dimension in his study on American Black English, that a group-identity oriented speech is associated with a sense of black pride (1980:263).

In all three studies above, though the roots of local resistance to the dominant language ideology and practice vary, the covert prestige and values associated with “illegitimate” languages co-exist with the recognition of the authority and status of the official language. These cases demonstrate that there is a spectrum of acceptance of the state’s language ideology, and of support for alternative language ideologies. Woolard points out “the competing sets of values create pressures in favor of the ‘illegitimate’ languages in the vernacular markets” (1985:744). The use

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\(^6\) Singapore was under the British rule from 1819-1963.
of the idea of a market is better understood with the help of a concept taken from Pierre Bourdieu, that capital formed in one area of society can be converted into other kinds of capital (1986). It is the coexistence of multiple language ideologies, which value linguistic capital associated with vernaculars and the official language differently on parallel markets, that explains how a social group, having a minority language as their mother tongue, like the Shanghairen interviewed in my study, strategize their linguistic practices.

Bourdieu differentiates four types of capital in an individual’s possession: economic capital rests on ownership, control, or proximity to wealthy or property; cultural capital does not refer to tangible resources, but rather represents knowledge or experience usually associated with high educational achievement; social capital is based more or less on social connections with others; and lastly symbolic capital refers to status, recognition, or prestige that results from certain knowledge or practice (1986, 1991). An individual’s possession of these kinds of capital matter for his or her social life in two dimensions: the total volume of diverse capitals, and the particular composition of them. The identification of various capitals is not only important to pinpoint the social position an individual occupies in a given society, but also demonstrates an individual’s unique stock of capitals convertible or tradable on the market.

Bourdieu makes it clear that economic capital is the basis for any capital conversion, for example, social capital is acquired in higher education institutions, which are in large measure only accessible to those can afford the tuition (1986). In the case of language practice, Bourdieu distinguishes linguistic capital from other knowledge grouped together under cultural capital. He argues that the family initially endows children with linguistic and cultural capital, but it is the school system that recognizes the composition and convertible values of those capitals, and establishes and reproduces the authority and legitimacy of particular linguistic and cultural forms.
The market for converting linguistic capital, according to Bourdieu, is integrated under the sponsorship of the state. In other words, proficiency in the official language, and the recognition of its dominance as taught in the school system—the two dimensions of language ideology—are assets produced and rewarded through the school system. Later, this linguistic capital associated with the official language will be available to be converted to symbolic, social, and economic capital on the job market and beyond.

Extending this Bourdieusian conceptualization of linguistic capital conversion to the alternative market of “illegitimate” languages—regional dialects in the case of the Shanghai dialect—within the dialect speaker group, the proficiency and belief in the value of the dialect can be converted into symbolic, social, and to a certain extent, economic capital. Rather than a universal, state-sponsored market, this alternative market has few resources and support, and thus relies heavily on the particular speaker group. In chapter three, I will illustrate the co-existence of the two markets, and cases of successful capital conversion in both of them.

The existence of parallel linguistic markets does not necessarily mitigate the pressure for linguistic conformity from the state felt by minority language speakers. From her study on Corsica, Jaffe argues that the resistance rather is directed at “a social process from which many people feel disenfranchised” (1999:30). To understand this kind of sentiment, Bourdieu argues that “social practice, language, dialect or accent are objects of mental representations when a group embarks on a quest for their regional identity, and are used strategically to meet the material and symbolic interests of their bearers” (1992:220). The material and symbolic interests of Shanghai dialect speakers are the focus of study. It is during the last two decades of economic reform and global city building that they experienced geographical displacement, felt linguistic marginalization, and are challenged right to the city.
Right to the Global City

Henri Lefebvre initially theorized the concept of “right to the city”, and though hard to pin down the exact meaning, this idea has recently become widely used in social sciences to address the decline of democracy and enfranchisement in cities, and contentions regarding citizenship and globalization at large. In the context of capitalist society and liberal-democratic social systems, Lefebvre calls for a reorientation of the decision making, away from the state and toward urban inhabitants, in particular in the production of urban space (1991). At first this idea does not appear applicable to the authoritarian state of China. However, as David Harvey points out in his assessment of “neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics”, economic reforms in China since the late 1970s coincided with the turn to neoliberal solutions in Britain and the United states, creating "a conjunctural accident of world-historical significance" (2005:120). In this new era in Mainland China, the central state has retreated in various aspects; local initiatives and private sectors have flourished; and local states have emerged to take a bigger role in the production of urban space.

Against this background the municipal government of Shanghai has experienced a shift from a managerial role to an entrepreneurial one; and the concept of “global city” has become relevant in Shanghai. The trend of economic globalization in the last thirty years, according to Harvey, witnessed the declining powers of nation-states to control multinational monetary flows, and this left the local state and agencies able to attract and to negotiate with international finance capital for specific investments (2001:348). Without economic reforms, the municipal or district governments in Shanghai, under the planned economy, was not autonomous enough to conduct such negotiations directly with foreign investors. With the autonomy that came with economic reform in China, Shanghai was able to realize ambitions of growth and expansion. This shift fueled the municipal and district governments’ aspiration to become more profitable and prominent in the
region, which coincided with the central state deciding to build Shanghai into a global city. It is within this new urban space that I situate my examination of Shanghairen’s attachment to their old urban central neighborhoods and the rising importance of the linguistic space of the Shanghai dialect. Thus, the right to the global city in my study not only means geographical occupation of urban space, but also access to social resources, and freedom to speak the vernacular.

The economic reforms that allow the municipal and district government in Shanghai direct contact with international finance capital, inevitably entails a subjection to “external coercive power” under inter-urban competition, which “brings individual cities closer into line with the discipline and logic of capitalist development” (Harvey, 2001:358). To realize its ambition to become the next global city, Shanghai needs to provide a “good business climate” to attract international investment, on par with those long established global cities such as New York, London, and Tokyo, in terms of infrastructure, labor force, and supportive services. According to Sassen, a global city is a significant production point of specialized financial and producer services that commands the globalized economy (2005). For Shanghai to grow into that role, to become a new node in this network of global cities, particular and expensive infrastructure such as airports and office towers, highly trained and specialized labor force such as professionals in law and finance, and lifestyle developments such as waterfront recreation areas and shopping malls, are required. With the construction of international and domestic airports, maglev train, and subway system, the establishment of special economic and industrial parks for foreign direct investors, and reforms that bypass the national hukou system to welcome foreign and domestic talents, Shanghai is swiftly meeting the expectations of its transformation.

In particular, an urban built environment devoted to lifestyle-based consumption patterns, such as gentrification, consumer attractions, and entertainment, helps the city to achieve its new
status by appearing “as an innovative, exciting, creative, and safe place to live, or to visit, to play and consume in” (Harvey, 2001:355). This dimension of a global city is for some concrete access to these consumption spaces, while for others such spaces reside more in the imagination. Ghertner shows in his study of urban redevelopment in Delhi, even slum-dwellers, who were displaced without compensation from public land in the process, take up the vision of “world-city aesthetics” and aspire to live in such an exciting global city of the future (2011). In the last two decades, we have witnessed in Shanghai the construction of the Shanghai Grand Theatre, Shanghai Museum, Shanghai Stadium, Shanghai Ocean Aquarium, and to be opened in June, 2016, Shanghai Disneyland Park; the flourishing of luxury shopping malls, upscale restaurants, and waterfront recreation areas by the Huangpu River, and along the Suzhou Creek; as well as the organization of the Shanghai Biennale, the annual Shanghai International Arts Festival, and the 2010 Shanghai Expo. These amenities and events not only provide proof of global city status, they also supply a social imaginary of a creative, exciting, and cosmopolitan place to live in. To a certain extent, this imaginary extends the right to the global city to those unable to afford to consume in it. In this light, we can understand why displaced Shanghaiders cheer about the city’s progress.

These cosmopolitan and iconic architecture and urban events, in Sklair’s words, “are an essential element in the marketing strategies of globalizing urban growth coalition” (2010:141). Behind the production of Shanghai’s new urban space is a “growth machine” (Logan & Molotch, 1986) with Chinese characteristics, comprising foreign and domestic investors, the central state, and the local government. From the case study of the development of the Lujiazui Central Business District in Pudong, along the east bank of the Huangpu River in the 1990s, Fu argues that Shanghai’s urban restructuring is neither entirely internally induced, as it was in the pre-reform
era, nor solely externally produced by global capital; rather, it is the outcome of the interaction of global capital and the central and local governments (2002:107).

This characterization is shared by other scholars looking at urban redevelopment cases across Shanghai, among which the most famous is the redevelopment of the Xintiandi area in the former French Concession by the coalition of the Shui On Group based in Hong Kong, Luwan District Government, and the Shanghai Municipal Government (See for example He & Wu, 2005; Ren, 2011: 110-123; Wai, 2006). Scholars have identified this as state-sponsored gentrification, in the sense that land ownership remained in the hands of the state, while huge incentives were given by the local government to lease the land to real estate developers (He, 2007; Zhang, 2006). In return, the municipal and district governments saw land value, revenue, and the fame of their jurisdictions rapidly increase. This newly vacated and highly desirable inner city land soon became crowded by modern office towers, shopping malls, and luxurious condos as a direct result of the private-public partnership in the global city building process in Shanghai.

The right to occupy those newly built residential and commercial spaces is protected by the state, and access to them is only granted to those who successfully “got rich first” in China’s economic reform. Swept out of sight when presenting Shanghai’s glamorous new look to the world, is the displacement and dispossession of more than one million households of Shanghairen since the 1990s. Urban renewal projects and the construction of new urban infrastructure entailed relocating long-term residents from urban central districts to the peripheral areas of the metropolis. These urban central districts that the displaced once occupied, are being transformed beyond recognition, and in many cases, now deny their access.

Mixed with the pride of living in a globalizing city is the bitterness and sense of loss among displaced Shanghairen. Despite the spaciousness and modern amenities of their new residences in
the city’s periphery, Shanghairen grieve about their demolished urban central neighborhoods. Those neighborhoods are regarded by Shanghairen as a sort of homeland, which according to the geographer Yi-fu Tuan, is a place viewed as “an archive of fond memories and splendid achievements that inspire the present” (1977:154). Tuan points out that people are attached to their homeland in two important ways; first, the homeland has landmarks of high visibility and social significance, and second, the daily routines in the homeland create a safe and familiar environment (1977:159). With many of the historic landmark buildings, such as Buddhist temples, and neoclassicist buildings on the Bund preserved in the urban redevelopment process, it is the second sense of attachment that is most useful for us to understand the difficulty that displaced Shanghairen experience in accepting and adjusting to the new urban landscape.

This is the kind of attachment associated with the rhythm of daily life, “with the memory of sounds and smells, of communal activities and homely pleasures accumulated over time” (Tuan, 1977:159). They are not objects of personal possession, which people can pack up and move with them to the new location; rather, they are intangible experiences and connections anchored in places that are forever gone. Tuan suggests these connections are essential for us to reconstruct our past and to understand our identity; examples include visits to our old neighborhoods and the birthplaces of our parents, or contact with people who knew us when we were young (1977:187). With the demolition of old alleyway housing neighborhoods in Shanghai’s urban center, the loss is not only physical urban landscape, but also a way of life, and the imprints of urban history, community life, and personal past. Shanghairen are deprived of specific physical structures and forms to help them anchor their place-bound identity.

The connection between space and time is not only apparent in reconstructing personal history with past experiences in particular spaces, but also in the very activities that comprise the
experience; Tuan relates time explicitly to space by stating that the movement that gives us a sense of space is itself taking place over a period of time, regardless how transient that period is (1977:118). In this sense, “every activity generates a particular spatial-temporal structure, but this structure seldom thrusts to the front of people’s awareness” (Tuan, 1977:131). The temporal dimension of the production of space is what I will now turn my focus to, in introducing the idea of linguistic space, to examine Shanghairen’s loss of the right to that space.

In my study, occupation of linguistic space means language usage in social interactions at any particular time point. The basic spatial-temporal act of speaking adds time to three-dimensional space. Thus, speaking the Shanghai dialect is an act of producing and claiming a linguistic space. To a certain extent, the sound of its vernacular affirms the identity of the locale. In this light, we can understand why the UN official, Xu Haoliang, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, would no longer regard the urban space as “Shanghai” if he could hear only Putonghua.

The occupation of the linguistic space by Putonghua was well underway when investment capital began to alter the physical urban landscape in the late 1990s. According to David Harvey, urban entrepreneurialism emphasizes the importance of the locality as a site of regulation of infrastructural provisions, labor relations, environmental controls, and even tax policy vis-à-vis international capital (2001:360). In this sense, not speaking the vernacular adds one more dimension to a desirable local business environment. The Shanghai dialect is unintelligible to most Chinese living outside of the Wu linguistic region, and surely to all foreigners learning to speak Putonghua, China’s official language. Thus, for rational urban governance, allowing the Shanghai dialect to occupy linguistic space is an obstacle for urban growth at the very least, or at worst, it is a sign of an unfriendly business environment.
Since the 1990s, the flow of a highly mobile labor force, including the relatively small proportion of the highly educated office workers and entrepreneurs, and the majority of less-educated manual laborers, have flooded the linguistic space in Shanghai with Putonghua. The decisive power of linguistic practice in Shanghai is in the hands of the central state, channeled through millions of internal migrants. The nationwide public school system guarantees the acquisition of Putonghua for Shanghairen and their counterparts across the country. The state-owned mass media reinforces the practices of Putonghua across the spectrum of age, gender, class, and home origin. Together, these forces prepared for the replacement of the Shanghai dialect with Putonghua in the globalizing Shanghai. The dispossession of linguistic space experienced by Shanghairen is a latent, though no less intended, consequence of the urban entrepreneurialism that seeks to attract and accommodate an international investment and labor force that speaks Putonghua.

To conclude, the analysis of the right to the city in the globalizing Shanghai is situated at the intersection of urban entrepreneurialism with Chinese characteristics, place attachment, and the disappearance of the linguistic space of the vernacular. Tuan points out that in general, whenever a person feels the world is changing too rapidly to comprehend, “the response is likely to evoke an idealized and stable past”; on the other hand, “when people feel that they themselves are directing the change, and in control of affairs of importance to them, then nostalgia has no place in their life: action rather than mementos of the past will support their sense of identity” (1977:188). Facing urban transformation created by the urban growth machine, and controlled by national elites and their delegates in Shanghai, Shanghairen are dispossessed, bewildered, and powerless.
Most of them are nostalgic for a linguistic space dominated by the Shanghai dialect, and romanticize demolished overcrowded alleyway housing. Some others are looking for a way to reclaim their city. After all, “[t]he right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources, but a common right that depends on the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization, and to assert the freedom to remake our cities and ourselves” (Harvey, 2008:23). A social awareness and movement to rescue the endangered Shanghai dialect, to reinstall its linguistic space in the globalizing Shanghai is the bottom-up effort by Shanghairen to reshape Shanghai, which has undergone massive redevelopment and urbanization at an unprecedented pace under neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics. What anchors this effort is collective consciousness of a cosmopolitan mentality with roots in the history of the city, and what this effort fights against is a nationalist image imposed by the state.

Nationalism versus Cosmopolitanism

Nationalism underlies both China’s state promotion of Putonghua and the state’s construction of Shanghai as a global city. This is another dimension crucial to understanding the language conflict currently ongoing in Shanghai, a city famed for its cosmopolitan past. This means a clash between the state power that enables the transformation, and the rise of forces of local identity, in the broader context of economic globalization. In the re-globalization process, Shanghai faces a unique dilemma, and the city and its people must negotiate between a nationalist agenda and the city’s historical connection with the world.

Gellner defines nationalism as “primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (1983:1). Furthermore, “there is the objective need for homogeneity which is reflected in nationalism, as a modern industrial state can only function with
a mobile, literate, culturally standardized, and interchangeable population” (Gellner, 1983:45). The implication of Gellner’s argument in this study is that to maintain political and ideological control throughout China, particularly under economic reform, the Chinese Communist Party requires an educated and culturally homogenous population. The cultural standardization and conformity stands in contrast to a sentiment of cosmopolitanism prevailing in Shanghai for the last century.

A standard national language appears essential in an industrial society, which according to Gellner, “requires sustained, frequent and precise communication between strangers, involving a sharing of explicit meaning, transmitted in a standard idiom and in writing when required” (1983:34). In this formulation, the adoption and promotion of a standard national language does not necessarily lead to replacement or endangerment of vernacular languages. The reason for the backlash and resistance that Putonghua faces in Shanghai lies in the official rhetoric connecting economic growth and nationalism, in terms of repression of local languages.

Gellner points out that “early industrialism means population explosion, rapid urbanization, labor migration, and also the economic and political penetration of previously more or less inward-turned communities, by a global economy and a centralizing polity” (1983:42). This process took place both at the beginning of the 20th century in Shanghai, and now again through sweeping economic reforms in China at the turn of the 21st century. Thus, industrialism and practical needs for communication are not sufficient explanations for the current endangerment of the Shanghai dialect, because when those forces reached Shanghai a century ago, the dialect thrived. What differs between these two periods is the role of the Chinese national state in Shanghai; one hundred years ago it was a weak presence co-existed with imperialist powers, and currently a strong authoritarian state under the Chinese Communist Party’s rule. I will explore the history and hybrid nature of the Shanghai dialect in more detail in chapter two; the dialect has always been a meeting
point for many different cultures and languages, since it developed as an urban dialect with cosmopolitan roots born in an industrial city.

The relation between the Chinese state’s vision of a strong and rising China, and a standard official language appears straightforward in light of the need of unity and conformity under nationalism. But it might be more muddled if we examine further, and in light of the two modern senses of “nation”; as Hobsbawm points out, one is a cultural relation between state and people based on political participation and is known as citizenship; the other is based on some imagined, shared cultural identity (1983). Gal elaborates Hobsbawm’s insight about nations on the issue of language that “the uniformity of language is...proof that the speaking subject is an authentic member of the nation, linking speaker and language to the past and its (invented) traditions” (1992:448).

This insight explains the rationale and urgency of the Chinese state’s promotion of Putonghua in the country’s recent intensified participation in globalization. The state’s rigid rejection of foreign cultural influences, especially notions of democracy and freedom of speech, makes apparent its fear of forces potentially disruptive to its rule. Gellner argues that “school-mediated, state-sponsored literacy is learned as citizens are ‘exo-socialized’ into the crypto-religion of the state, which is nationalism” (1983:57). Through the public education system, Putonghua has been promoted across the country, together with a patriotic ideology. The official language is regarded by the state as a uniting force to synthesize a united history of the Chinese people, and to mitigate the internal tension resulting from rising income and regional inequality in the economic reform era. The imposed happy fusion between the Chinese nation and Putonghua exemplifies an illusion Gal identifies elsewhere, which is “a circumscribed and internally homogeneous language with a similarly configured nation” (1992:449).
Hobsbawm’s first idea of nation can be applied smoothly in terms of the connection between nation, citizenship, and language; while it is his second sense of nation that proves most useful to understanding the collapse of an imagined, internalized “Chinese” identity. As I will detail in chapter three, the entire Chinese legal structure, from the constitution down to local regulations, requires citizens to speak Putonghua, abiding to the first sense of the nation, in terms of political and social obligations. However, the idea of Chinese as a unified ethnicity is problematic. Within China, “Chinese” is more an imposed political identity than a historically rooted cultural identity. There is never an agreed upon national cuisine or a nationwide shared mother tongue with which to identify a uniform Chinese identity.

The significance of language for a social group’s exclusive membership and autonomy was declared by Fichte as early as in the 19th century, that “wherever a separate language can be found, there is also a separate nation which has the right to manage its affairs and rule itself” (1845-46:453, cited in Woolard, 1992:239). Concordance with this idea was already evident in a Western European context, when in the “aftermath of the French Revolution, a need for a unifying national identity, expressed in part by a single national language, was suddenly perceived” (Dorian, 1999:5, citing Grillo, 1989:22-42; Kuter, 1989:76). Exported through colonialism, this socially constructed nationalist agenda of language domination is “globally hegemonic today…state policies as well as challenges to the state around the world are structured by this nationalist ideology of language and identity” (Woolard, 1998:16-7).

In a former Western European colony, Indonesia’s state government uses the educational system and national anniversary every year to confer a nationalist program, instilling a public and formal recognition of a “unified people” speaking “one language” in a “single homeland” (Errington, 2000:208). Similar to Putonghua in China, Indonesian is more or less an artificial,
state-supported dialect, hardly spoken natively in the majority of this former Dutch colony by the time of the World War II. But by 1995 it had become the fully viable, universally acknowledged national language, native to relatively few, but clearly ascendant over hundreds of ethnic languages spoken among more than two hundred million Indonesians (Errington, 2000:208-09).

Closer to Mainland China, the promotion of Mandarin in Taiwan under the Kuomintang government after 1949 was of no less harm to indigenous languages native to the island. The decline of Taiwan’s indigenous languages is often blamed on early prohibition and subsequent neglect in the areas of education and media (Li, 2014:74). By the 1990s, the island had become 90% Mandarin-speaking, up from only 4% half a century before (Her, 2009:385-86), and the majority of the population had long since shifted to using Mandarin in all domains (Chen, 2010:86). Both cases exemplify Gellner’s argument about the co-development of nation-states and national languages (1983).7

In Mainland China, earlier studies have pointed out the connection between the promotion of Putonghua and the nationalist agenda from the perspective of national unity and political control. For example, Ramsey argues that the promotion of Putonghua is the product of modern nationalism, made possible through modernization of the education system, transportation, and communication methods (1989:30). Zhou and Ross also argue that the nationwide advocacy for a single, standardized language reflects the cultural and political elites’ agenda of building up national unity on the one hand, and political controllability on the other (2004). In terms of the promotion of Putonghua, and a national identity anchored on language in ethnic minority regions, Guo stresses that Putonghua “serves as a tool for both political control of the country’s periphery and the construction of a homogenous identity of Chinese-ness” (2004). In my study, I will address how

7 Despite Chinese Communist Party leaders refuse to accept Taiwan as an independent country, the case of Kuomintang’s intention to build up solidarity and unity in Taiwan as a nation-state serves my argument here.
this language-based nationalist agenda is enforced at the frontier of China’s encounter with globalization, and how a homogenous national identity is challenged in Shanghai.

Nationalism is a useful and powerful tool for population control when an authoritarian state opens itself even partially to the world, especially in the light that “[n]ationalism is not the awakening of an old, latent, dormant force, though that is how it does indeed present itself. It is in reality the consequence of a new form of social organization” (Gellner, 1983:48). By presenting Putonghua as the ancestral language of the Han Chinese, and binding it with a national identity, the Chinese state has engaged in social engineering in deliberate ways to forge a sense of unity and loyalty. Thus, the cosmopolitanism of Shanghai with its rich semi-colonial, industrial history is at odds with China’s message of a unified national identity, and needs to be quieted and even excised, for the “invented” one-ness of nation-state to prevail.

Over the course of Shanghai’s relatively short history, nationalism took on different meanings. Gellner argues, “the age of transition to industrialism was bound to be an age of nationalism” (1983:40). The anti-colonial and labor protests in Shanghai during the turbulent years of the early 20th century exemplify this. The nationalist sentiment then was anchored on political independence from imperialist and capitalist powers. However, in current times, on the issue of language, it is the very same kind of nationalist agenda, albeit one of unification through cultural homogeneity, that local Shanghairen hesitate to support. The uniformity and cultural homogeneity required by the nationalist vision clashes with the diversity inherited from Shanghai’s semi-colonial history, landscape, urban culture, and population.

Unlike the majority of Mainland China, the city of Shanghai has grown out of a semi-colonial treaty port history. Starting with the Treaty of Nanking, signed between the Qing Dynasty and Great Britain, which introduced the political anomaly of extraterritoriality, Shanghai became
a shared jurisdiction between Britain, France, the United States, and after 1895, Japan. The existence of different concessions, each with its own set of extraterritorial laws, meant the daily life in Shanghai was a constant negotiation between Chinese and foreign powers, and among the foreign powers themselves.

Out of that historical and political condition grew a “genuine cosmopolitanism”, as Ulf Hannerz defines it. He characterizes the city and its population, as having an orientation or openness toward divergent cultural experiences, an interest in contrasts rather than uniformity, and a cultural competence to readily make one’s way into other cultures (1990:239). Shanghai’s claim of a cosmopolitan past in the early 20th century means knowledge of other cultures, especially western cultures, and apparent tolerance or a blasé attitude, in Simmel's term, to live in a western-oriented, culturally-diverse environment. This is an experience that in large, the rest of China had little access or exposure to.

The city’s experience of diversity was not without tension with the central state in the early 20th century. Abbas sees the friction largely between Chinese-ness and cosmopolitanism that “Shanghai’s strength as a cosmopolitan city was always based on China’s weakness as a nation. Therefore, there was always an underlying tension between national culture on the one hand, which could only be constructed as anticolonial resistance, and Shanghai cosmopolitanism on the other (2002:215)”. Leo Ou-fan Lee interprets the phenomenon as less contentious, that the urban culture in Shanghai is a Chinese interpretation of modern cosmopolitan culture, “not as the cultural domination by the foreign but as the appropriation by the local of elements of foreign culture to enrich a new national culture” (1999:104).

These “foreign” elements have been written about from the perspective of population composition, religious beliefs, and architectural styles in studies on Shanghai. At the core of
Shanghai’s cosmopolitanism, argues Lu, is that the city has a well-established tradition of accepting newcomers, starting with the influx of merchants of the cotton trade in the 18th century from as far as Manchuria and Southeast Asia (2002:178). The later treaty port era, after the Opium War (1839-42), according to Lu, scaled up the openness “norm” in accepting outsiders (2002:179).

Abbas points out that the treaty port century in Shanghai’s history (1843-1945) was a time when the modern world was dominated by economically and politically more advanced Western powers, and thus, being cosmopolitan meant by and large being versed in Western ways (2002:210). Therefore, illustrations of the Golden Era of Old Shanghai largely focus on ways in which the city embraced Western culture, including ideologies, religious beliefs and consumer culture (See for example Bergère, 2000; Lee, 1999; Lu, 1999; Pan, 1982; Wasserstrom, 2009; Yeh, 2008).

But, it would be misleading to think of Shanghai’s cosmopolitanism as simply an East meets West phenomenon, with dominant Western European and American influences. There were always non-Western and non-Chinese actors playing key roles in the story of Shanghai’s globalization; for example, businessmen from Korea, Jewish Baghdadi real estate moguls, or Filipino musicians employed by the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra (Wasserstrom, 2009:129). Among the non-Western and non-Chinese participants in Shanghai’s initial rise to global city status were also White Russians, Sikh and Vietnamese policemen, Japanese soldiers (Gamble, 2003:200) and a displaced Indonesian “radical”, who found himself in Shanghai in 1932, and that experience “shaped this ‘hero of national independence’ to confront colonialism and the nationalist agitations in Jakarta in the 1940s” (Kusno, 2003).

Shanghai possessed many temples and shrines honoring various gods, individuals, and philosophers such as Lao-Tzi (Taoism) and Kong-Tzi (Confucianism). Besides these Chinese
homegrown religious beliefs, many others coexisted in Shanghai, which endowed the city with a diverse spiritual character that embraced Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and various local religions (Denison & Ren, 2006:25). The architecture within these various communities honored those traditions and their gods and goddesses, best illustrating the cultural heterogeneity in Shanghai. Domestic architecture was widely variable as well, with Qing dynasty courtyard houses, art deco apartment buildings, Western classical style public buildings, mock Tudor cottages, standing alongside Shikumen housing, which is a hybrid of a Chinese traditional courtyard house and Western townhouse (Gamble, 2003:200).

The cosmopolitan population, jurisdiction, and culture were overhauled upon the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. Nationalism trumped the individual character of the city. Holston and Appadurai point out that “one of the essential projects of nation building has been to dismantle the historic primacy of urban citizenship and to replace it with the national” (1996:196), and in the years since 1949, the cosmopolitan and migrant identity of Shanghai has been replaced by a national identity through legal, educational, and propaganda systems. With the transformation of China into a market economy, the contradictory notions of nationalism and cosmopolitanism converge again in Shanghai.

For more than a century, Shanghai was a surrogate of the West, with its Western-looking urban built environment and supply of Western commodities and culture. The material difference created and continuously reinforced a distinction, suggesting a Shanghainese identity, separate from Chinese identity but not fully Western either, however modern and cosmopolitan. The historically cosmopolitan Shanghai now faces a dilemma in the ongoing re-globalization. For a large part of China, embracing state-led globalization means discarding the local and the traditional, to embrace nationalism fashioned in the age of globalization. In Shanghai, cosmopolitanism today means
accommodating global trends, but not necessarily with tolerance for native Chinese from poor, rural regions – especially when they share the urban spaces of Shanghai. It is an engineered diversity mixing Shanghai’s historically local characters inherited from the semi-colonial era, openness to the world, and intolerance of, or at least uneasiness with rural, inland Chinese-ness.

In the post-colonial context, in describing the globalizing Singapore, Brenda Yeoh interprets cosmopolitanism as "an ideal, a desirable goal and a dream, which speaks of a unifying vision for urban democracy and governance in a globalizing world" (2004:2431). In the similar vein, Dharwadker explains values of cosmopolitanism as "inclusive egalitarian heterogeneity, of the tolerance of difference and otherness, of the equitable (re)distribution of resources and privileges, of the recognition of others' freedoms, of (comm)unity in diversity” (2001:7). This indiscriminative inclusive-ness, tolerance of differences, and celebration of diversity in a democratic city was not likely to be the case for a global city built by an authoritarian state.

Shanghai’s reconnection with its early 20th century cosmopolitan golden age differs from recent changes in post-socialist cities such as Budapest or East Berlin, whose reconnections with the West were brought on by the collapse of the Communist Party’s power (Wasserstrom, 2009:135-38). In Budapest, there has been an increasing degree of social and cultural heterogeneity within the city’s borders, a proliferation of difference, as people from varied places, speaking varied dialects and languages, plying varied trades, worshipping in varied ways, and cooking in diverse styles converge on a locale (Szelenyi, 1996). In Europe, many migrants are now coming from other countries and regions, hardly under the control of European governments. But in Shanghai, all the redevelopment, reconnection, and reclamation of global city status are cautiously initiated, and closely monitored by the state under the Chinese Communist Party’s rule.
The flow of people coming into the city, though there are some foreign expatriates, are largely from other parts of China, who speak the same language and share the same ideology. To talk about cosmopolitanism in Shanghai today, does not mean the locals share the openness to varied ideologies, diverse languages, or architectural styles earlier generations had, but rather a national language forcing out the vernacular, and a state-sponsored “global city look” replacing vernacular and historically cosmopolitan architecture; this juxtaposition is explored in chapters three and four.

Shanghai presents a site to study the localization of global forces, but more importantly, it allows me to examine the articulation and execution of nationalist visions and projects. This study of the language conflict in Shanghai illustrates the uniqueness of China’s participation in globalization, that selective global forces are allowed in, but only to serve and strengthen the Communist Party’s rule. This study will greatly contribute to examinations of confrontations between the local and the national in global city studies, especially those that focus on post-colonial and post-socialist cities.

Research Methods

To capture the multiple social processes Shanghairen use to make sense of, and come to terms with, the recent urban transformation, I used mixed methods in this study, including archival research, surveys, in-depth interviews and qualitative observation. The first phase of my research started in the summer of 2013 in New York City. During this phase, I was able to access documents online regarding state language policies and statements from the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China regarding the annual Putonghua Promotion Week from 1998 to 2013. Also remotely, through Weibo, the Chinese twitter, and Wechat, a Chinese smartphone social
network app, I established contact with Shanghai dialect preservation activists and public intellectuals interested in the fate of the vernacular. Many of them became gatekeepers essential for my fieldwork in Shanghai.

My fieldwork took place in Shanghai in the fall and winter of 2013. I conducted 50 in-depth interviews with members of the following groups: activists in the Shanghai dialect preservation movement, public intellectuals, school teachers and principals, vernacular novelists and comedians, journalists, college language organization leaders, and entrepreneurs in the language training business. The majority of them were born in, and spent most, if not all, of their life in Shanghai. Highly educated, of a middle class background, these participants all regard the Shanghai dialect as their native language. The only exceptions were a publisher who came from the Anhui province and three entrepreneurs in the language training business who came from the Zhejiang province, which is adjacent to Shanghai. The publisher attended college and lived in Shanghai for more than 20 years. He spoke Shanghai dialect with a Mandarin accent, and was the leading figure in publishing Shanghai dialect related works. The three entrepreneurs spoke another variation of the Wu language—very similar to the Shanghai dialect—as their mother tongue, and had lived in Shanghai for more than a decade.

Apart from interviewing experts and those who have a personal stake in the dialect-speaking issue, I also investigated changes in language choices and practices of ordinary native Shanghairen of various backgrounds. Using my personal connections, I was able to recruit a wide variety of participants, ranging from college students in their early 20s, middle-class parents in their 30s and 40s, to middle-school educated seniors laid off from their work units in the 1990s, the majority being of a middle class background. All participants had experienced an outward movement from the overcrowded urban residence of childhood or youth to current single-family
apartments or condos. The conversation about language practices invariably led to reminiscences about their old neighborhoods, feelings of alienation, and descriptions of new urban areas and public transportation systems which did not exist ten or five years ago. Their ready association of changes in language practices and changes to the urban demography, and to the urban landscape through these interviews confirmed my research questions about the relationship between language choices and urban transformations in Shanghai.

To comply with the requirements of the Institutional Review Board on research involving human subjects, I provided and explained consent forms to all my interview participants at the beginning of our interviews. At the end of the consent form, I included one additional question asking whether they would allow me to use their real names in the dissertation and future publications resulting from this study. All of my interview participants checked yes to that question, feeling they had nothing to hide about their language choices and opinions on urban transformation. Those involved in the dialect preservation movement eager for more publicity or international attention, academic or not, were particularly excited about the prospect of being quoted or mentioned in my future publications outside of China. That is why throughout the dissertation, other than two occasions, I used the interview participants’ real names. The two occasions involved opinions on China’s current political system, and conversations with a journalist working for a leading state-owned Shanghai newspaper. Both these interview subjects requested me not identify them, and I sought to avoid potential exposure.

Anonymity was less an issue for my survey research. Modeled after Woolard’s study on Catalan speakers in Barcelona in the 1980s, my survey questionnaire focused on Shanghai dialect proficiency and language choices at home, in school, at work, and in public, with different audiences, and covering decades of private and public life. Compared to the interview respondents,
the 250 survey participants were of a more diverse educational and class background. The survey questionnaire also included demographic information about families’ origins, mother tongues of the parents, education levels, and occupations, but the respondent’s name or contact information was not collected.

Using snowball sampling technique, I recruited respondents both offline, in public gathering spaces, and online, via the professional survey website, Surveymonkey.com, which is the online host of my survey questionnaire. Online recruitment was aided by Weibo and Wechat, which allowed my initial respondents to send the web link of the survey questionnaire to their family members, coworkers, friends and acquaintances with a simple copy and paste. The offline recruitment mostly targeted seniors who were unfamiliar or uncomfortable with using computers or smartphones to fill out the online questionnaire. To collect data from that demographic group, I developed two strategies. First, I encouraged young and middle-aged survey participants to recruit their parents into the study, and help them with filling out the online survey questionnaire.

Secondly, I obtained permission from a dialect preservation movement activist, Ge Minmin, who had recently retired after twenty-five years editing the well-known Shanghai dialect radio show he created, to distribute survey questionnaires at the free Shanghai Storytelling Gathering (shanghai gushi hui) that he organized. Since April 2012, this biweekly Shanghai vernacular stand-up comedy and talk show, sponsored and housed at the Shanghai Mass Art Center (shanghaishi qunzhong yishuguan), has attracted a loyal following among Shanghairen retirees. To me, they were a hard to reach group, often suspicious of strangers, and fearful of trickery. An introduction from their beloved host, Mr. Ge, smoothed my way to recruit many longtime Shanghairen into my study. For a half hour before the beginning of four consecutive biweekly events, I was able to collect survey responses from audience members ranging in age from 60 to nearly 90. For those
without their reading glasses handy, I read aloud survey questions and response categories. Slowly, I was able to collect highly valuable data, from people no more than one generation removed from migrants to Shanghai, who nevertheless spoke the Shanghai dialect and regarded themselves as Shanghairen.

Since I used improbable sampling technique to recruit survey participants, the data generated are not representative of the entire study population, which is native Shanghairen living in Shanghai. Unable to use these data to predict language death, I rely on these descriptive data from the survey to investigate generational differences in terms of dialect competences and language practices. These individual level changes taking places over decades, within one’s family or in public, provide snapshots of impact of state policies on linguistic space.

Supplementing my interview and survey data, I employed triangulation, which is the use of two or more different measures to collect data on the same social phenomenon (Brewer & Hunter, 1989:17). In both in-depth interviews and survey questionnaires, I asked about the language choice in public: namely, which language my research participants used to communicate with friends, acquaintances, shopkeepers, bank cashiers, or staff at government agencies. The ethnography I conducted in Shanghai in the fall and winter of 2013 provided me opportunities to cross-validate language proficiency and choice data, as well as to capture how social dynamics played out in linguistic practices. Those dynamics mostly involved demonstration of educational level, of social status, and, most importantly, of Shanghairen identity, a fascinating category I explore throughout this work.

Participant observations in public spaces, such as public transit, shopping malls, hospital lobbies, restaurants, or parks also expanded the scope of my data collection to include non-Shanghairen, who do not speak the Shanghai dialect. To communicate with them, bilingual
Shanghairen had no choice but to switch to Putonghua. The subtle but significant tension and hesitation, in the split second when a bilingual Shanghairen judged the circumstance and decided which language to use to initiate conversation with a stranger in public, was crucial for a better understanding of social distance and social integration in urban Shanghai.

At the end of December in 2013. Using qualitative data analysis software, Atlas.ti, I coded all my interview transcripts in Chinese and organized important quotations into groups corresponding to the topics of my three empirical chapters. Out of the roughly forty-seven hours of interview recording, I only translated into English those interview excerpts that were actually used in the dissertation.

In terms of survey results, descriptive data generated by Surveymonkey.com, along with field notes from my observations were incorporated into my writing about the broader linguistic landscape in Shanghai. Data collected through this combination of research methods about language practices all come together to depict the social and cultural costs of urban transformation in Shanghai.

Chapter Overview

Aside from the historical chapter following the introduction, three empirical chapters make up the core of this dissertation. The first empirical chapter is devoted to language policies and practices, while the other two describe social changes more broadly, focusing on the Shanghairen’s sense of urban space and local identity.

I describe the cosmopolitan urban history of Shanghai in chapter two from three perspectives. The unique character of Shanghai, first and foremost, lies in its nature as a migrant city. I detail the four major waves of internal migration into Shanghai since the mid-19th century.
Each of these took place in a particular historical period significant for contemporary Chinese history, and stood at a junction of local, national and global forces. The second aspect of Shanghai’s urban history is the continuous urbanization and socio-geographical hierarchy of city neighborhoods. The issue of boundary has always been important in Shanghai, from the city wall between the territory controlled by the Qing Dynasty and the settlement and concession under the Western imperialist rule, to a “Upper/Lower Corner” geographical divide based on quality of housing and socioeconomic status of residents, to the Huangpu River which separates the urban west and formerly rural east bank, and traverses the city before reaching the East China Sea. Lastly, I provide a brief explanation of the origin and development of the Shanghai dialect. It is a hybrid urban language rooted in the Wu linguistic family, dating back six thousand years. The rising economic and cultural significance of Shanghai in the region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries brought the regional language to a peak in prestige, influence, and use. But only a century removed from that era, we will learn, from my research, about its decline and endangerment.

In chapter three, I examine the reasons for the dim prospects for the Shanghai dialect, emphasizing the Chinese Communist Party’s state language policies, particularly the strengthening of such policies in the last two decades. From a four-tiered legal structure of language laws, to national campaigns initiated by nine central government agencies since 1998, and administrative orders for workplace language practices, I illustrate the full scope of the promotion of Putonghua and the marginalization of regional dialects. The effect has been profound, and we see that in the context of China’s economic reform, the top-down promotion of Putonghua taps into pragmatic locals’ motivation for upward mobility.

Expanding Bourdieu’s argument on the close relationship between state power and official language, I differentiate two markets for the conversion of linguistic capital into social, cultural,
and economic capitals. The dominant market is created and controlled by the state, rewarding Putonghua competence through the education system and the labor market. Though on the fringe, the market of converting the linguistic capital of the Shanghai dialect into social and symbolic capital is still alive within the Shanghai community. However, the existence of this market is unlikely to save the dialect from endangerment, as I will show that Shanghai dialect competence has drastically declined over the course of just one generation. To combat against this trend, a small group of highly educated Shanghai residents has started a Shanghai dialect preservation movement. I document their strategies and internal conflicts at the end of chapter three.

The focus in chapter four is how geographical displacement also contributes to the endangerment of the Shanghai dialect. Urban redevelopment and expansion in the last two decades in the state-led global city building process renders a multi-dimensional loss among Shanghai residents, from the linguistic environment to the right to urban space. In place of traditional and dilapidated alleyway housing, glass-façade skyscrapers characterize the current urban built environment in Shanghai. The displaced Shanghai residents, who are now homeowners rather than renters of state property, uniformly express alienation, and wholesale rejection of the new urban landscape. In their eyes, the new built landscape has obliterated Shanghai’s unique character. Powerless to confront the physical urban transformation resulting from the private-public partnership and controlled by national elites and their local delegates, Shanghai residents create an alternative urban space in their mental mapping of the city. What they recognize as Shanghai is located in the city’s historic west bank, with a built environment inherited from semi-colonial times; in this space, speaking the local dialect remains a sign of membership.

In chapter five, I examine the demographic dimension of the urban transformation in Shanghai. Fifteen years after the beginning of reforms to the hukou system, and thirty years into
the economic reform, the privilege once exclusively associated with a Shanghai \textit{hukou} has diminished. Furthermore, to meet the labor demand of building a global city, the municipal government has created new categories that sidestep the national \textit{hukou} system, and grant internal migrants legal status and access to social services in the city. Under this overarching structural change, my closer look into the social integration of recent internal migrants reveals that this acceptance is based on educational level and socioeconomic status. That is to say, in the social space shared at a workplace, in social circles and in the family, Shanghairen are more comfortable with highly educated and better-off migrants.

The institutional and selective social acceptance of migrants, however, backfires in the debate of who counts as a Shanghairen. In this study, for the purpose of clarification, I call those born to Shanghairen parents and with an urban Shanghai \textit{hukou} “natives” or “native Shanghairen (Shanghai people)”, and those born to non-Shanghairen parents “non-natives”; in the case of those who later acquire a Shanghai \textit{hukou}, “non-native Shanghairen”. This categorization can be inaccurate in various ways; for example, first and second generation migrants to Shanghai, arriving before the household registration system was put into place in the 1950s, identify themselves as Shanghairen. In the second part of chapter five, I discuss the various dimensions of Shanghairen identity, including legal, residential, linguistic, and the most important indicator, an individual’s self-identification. In the end, a particular combination of mindset and demeanor, that I call Shanghairen habitus, emerges, and will remain a significant way of making distinctions in the revived migrant city.

To conclude, in chapter six I summarize the social and cultural costs of Shanghai’s urban transformation: the diminished linguistic space of the Shanghai dialect, the loss of character of the urban built environment, the challenged right to the city among native Shanghairen, and the
continued ambiguity of Shanghairen identity. Though I do not predict the death of the Shanghai dialect, I share my interview subjects’ serious concern about its future. Lastly, looking beyond Shanghai, I propose a future comparative study with Hong Kong on the fate of local dialect, regional identity, and populist democracy in light of the Cantonese-speaking pro-universal-suffrage “Umbrella Revolution” crushed by the central government.
Chapter 2: A Cosmopolitan Past

Though globalization has changed the face of Shanghai, the city has a cosmopolitan past that began with the end of the Opium War in 1843. As part of the Treaty of Nanjing, Shanghai was forced to open to the West as a treaty port. Cosmopolitanism in Shanghai a century and a half ago was mostly characterized as a juxtaposition of cultures; in other words, East meets West. In order to understand the city’s cosmopolitanism in the mid-nineteenth century, especially in contrast with the rest of the country, which was still mostly closed from Western or other outside influence, it is useful to see “[c]osmopolitanism was first a modernist argument against the tyranny of “tradition” as narrow parochialism and ethnocentrism” (Abbas, 2002:210). In this view, Shanghai as a treaty port was open to the modern world, which was then dominated by economically and politically more advanced Western powers. Thus, rather than indiscriminative inclusive-ness, tolerance of differences, and celebration of diversity, being cosmopolitan in Shanghai meant Chinese subjects being versed in Western ways.

From the city’s migration history, urban landscape, and hybrid dialect, I will illustrate in this chapter the fabricated cosmopolitan past of Shanghai. To understand Shanghai’s cosmopolitan character, we first need to look at the two competing narratives of Shanghai’s origin. The one recognized and promoted by the central and municipal government stresses that Shanghai has a rich history, reaching back seven hundred years as a coastal town, and though Shanghai rose to become a cosmopolitan metropolis in the early twentieth century, it was invaded, occupied, and exploited by the West. Western settlers, as the historian Jeffrey Wasserstrom points out, favored a counter-narrative. These settlers declared 1843 as the year the city was founded, and thus, their presence was natural and beneficial to the land and to the native people (2009:120).
There is merit and fault in both narratives. On the one hand, when Shanghai Township first appeared in Chinese historical records, it was not located where urban Shanghai is now, which disputes the official narrative of seven hundred years’ local history. On the other hand, to argue that Shanghai did not exist at all until 1843 disregards all previous history and the significant Chinese population that lived on the land currently occupied by metropolitan Shanghai. Therefore, for the central and local state in Shanghai to insist on the rich history of Shanghai Township before the treaty is to claim the city’s Chinese origin. This narrative downplays the role played by foreign forces in building the city’s cosmopolitan past; this version of events is vital to the current state-led global city building process. This time, Shanghai will become a bigger and stronger, and distinctly Chinese global city, under the Chinese Communist Party’s leadership.

Interestingly, the second narrative has its supporters among the so-called native Shanghairen, whose ancestors mostly came to Shanghai in the late 19th or early 20th centuries from nearby towns or villages in the Yangtze River Delta. Compared to the recent internal migrants to Shanghai, brought in to meet the labor demand of a globalizing city, these Shanghairen are the earlier migrants, or descendants of earlier migrants who contributed to Shanghai’s cosmopolitan past a century ago. By insisting on 1843 as the beginning of the city of Shanghai, these Shanghairen assert their birthright to the city. This migration history of the city is crucial for understanding the cosmopolitan identity of Shanghai, and the conflicts between so-called native Shanghairen and recent migrants, which I will elaborate in chapter five.

A Migrant City

The history of Shanghai is a history of migration. The now so-called native Shanghairen (Shanghai people) are urbanites descended from migrants only a century ago, that is to say, they
themselves are second or third generation migrants. When Huating County—later renamed Songjiang County, and which Shanghai Township once belonged to—was established in the prosperous Tang Dynasty (AD 751). At that time, the current urban area of Shanghai was still under water on the continuously expanding Yangtze River Delta. Therefore, no group can claim themselves indigenous to the city (Zhu, Liu & Chen, 2008:7).

For most of its over seven hundred years’ history, Shanghai was initially a fishing village, and later a trading port. The simultaneous remoteness from political power located in the north, and function as a river trading post made Shanghai similar to other townships in the Yangtze River Delta. The circular wall (See Figure 2.1) reflected the city’s relatively minor political status among China’s larger imperial cities, most of which employed sharp rectangular walls and linear street patterns. According to official records, 1291 was the year when a place called “Shanghai” first appeared in written documents. The predecessor of that town was a fishing village in the tenth

![Figure 2.1: Map of Shanghai county seat in Qing Dynasty Tongzhi Period (1861-74). Source: Wikimedia Commons.](image)

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century called Hu Du, naming after *hu* (沪, bamboo stakes), which fisherman sank into the mud to anchor their nets (Dong, 2000:12). In 1291, Shanghai County was established with Shanghai Town as the county seat. At that time, the county seat was merely nine square *li*, approximately 556 acres (Zou, 1980:90-1), located at the tip of the Yangtze River Delta, facing the East Sea of China, and sat at the midpoint of China’s coastline. This ideal location made it a major port in China’s coastal trade by the seventeenth century, and a big lure for anyone attempting access to China’s interior (Dong, 2000:12).

On 29 August 1842, the defeated Qing Dynasty signed the Treaty of Nanjing to end the Opium War. The treaty made Shanghai one of five treaty ports opened to British residence and trade. The treaty granted the British a vast amount of land west and north of the walled county seat in 1843. This historical event forever changed the fate of Shanghai, and set it on the trajectory to become a migrant city, and cosmopolitan metropolis in the early 20th century.

The population of the Shanghai County grew only gradually since its establishment in the late 13th century, but increased rapidly after 1843. The early residents of the predecessor, the Songjiang County, were migrants from the neighboring Suzhou region, and refugees from Genghis Khan’s invasion of central China, which drove the Song Dynasty and its Han Chinese subjects south to establish the South Song Dynasty (AD 1127—1279). That new dynasty set up its capital in Hangzhou roughly 100 miles southwest of Shanghai (Zhu, Liu & Chen, 2008:7). Historically, Chinese elite and literati were rooted in rural areas, where they kept their permanent property, family tombs and lineage temples. Urban living was mostly for officials to fulfill their duties, or for merchants. Little evidence indicates any large rural-urban migration to Shanghai before 1843 (Zhao, 2004:52).

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8 The other four treaty ports were Canton, Xiamen, Fuzhou, and Ningbo. In the same treaty, Hong Kong was ceded to Britain as a colony.
Before the outbreak of the Opium War (AD 1839–1842), the population of Shanghai was estimated to be one hundred and twenty thousand (Zhu, Liu & Chen, 2008:7, cited from Shanghai County—Custom). In that year of “Opening Treaty Ports” (开埠, kaibu), the population in Shanghai was less than two hundred thousand (Zhu, Liu & Chen, 2008:9). Within merely ten years, official records show that by 1852, the population had nearly tripled, to reach 544,413, largely due to internal migration (Zou, 1980:113).

This first population boom in Shanghai was the direct result of a war between China and the West. It represented the characteristics of the city’s migration history; that it was engendered by forces beyond the city’s wall, and largely beyond the country’s wall, even though the population involved were mostly Chinese. Before rigid measures were put into place to restrict migration into the city during the Maoist era, this characteristics of large migration into Shanghai repeated four times, which I will illustrate in detail below. The economic reform era since 1990s in Shanghai, when the central state initiated the building of a global city, we have seen this characteristics revived. Similar to nearly a century ago, this time too, the population involved are mostly Chinese from other parts of the country, and their geographical mobility are enabled and subjected to forces beyond the city and the country’s wall, in the larger context of globalization.

Waves of Early Migration

Shanghai quickly turned into a migrant city after kaibu. During the treaty port period (1843-1943), the population of Shanghai grew almost threefold, from around half a million in the mid-19th century to almost 1.3 million in 1900, and increased to 3.7 million by 1935. The population in 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party took over and most foreigners left the city, was roughly 5.46 million (Zou, 1980:90-1, 113). Among any of these periods of time, the original
population of the Shanghai County never counted more than one-fifth of the urban population (Zou, 1980:112-13). The main reason for such rapid population growth was waves of internal migration, driven mostly by war out of the home region and attracted by economic prospects in the metropolis.

In the last century and a half, Shanghai has experienced four huge waves of internal migration. The urban population first started to increase rapidly during the Taiping Rebellion (AD 1851-1864), a peasant-led revolt against the Qing Dynasty that originated in Guangxi province in southern China. Shanghai itself came under threat when the rebel’s army established the Heavenly Kingdom and set the capital in Nanking, only two hundred miles to the northwest. Twice the army of Taiping appeared outside of the walls of Shanghai, in 1860 and 1862, and twice they were defeated by joint French, British, and Qing Dynasty forces (Bergère, 2009: 42-4). During that period, hundreds of thousands fled their homes in the Yangtze River Delta to seek refuge in Shanghai’s foreign concessions, which quickly changed these areas from “quarters reserved for Westerns into Sino-foreign towns” (Bergère, 2009:44).

It is from the influx of war refugees during the Taiping Rebellion that a social hierarchy based on regional origin began to develop among Chinese residents of the city, in both the walled Chinese City and the foreign concessions. Many of the wealthy gentry and merchant families that had sought refuge in the treaty port during the Taiping Rebellion remained in Shanghai, often in partnership with foreigners, and began investing in trade and commerce, shifting native capital from the countryside into the city (Dong, 2000:64). Merchants, gentry, and literati came predominantly from the adjacent Suzhou-Wuxi area of southern Jiangsu province, the Ningbo-Shaoxing region of northern Zhejiang province, and Canton; while laborers mostly came from northern Jiangsu province (Dong, 2000:75-6; Honig, 1992:12).
The second wave of migration was caused by the Boxer Rebellion (or Yi He Tuan Movement, 1898-1900), when war refugees again poured into the settlement and concessions to escape the unrest and revolts in the nearby countryside. Among this influx, class differentiation based on origin echoed that of the first wave. The gentry and merchants from southern Jiangsu and northern Zhejiang joined their earlier counterparts to form the Chinese elite group in Shanghai. Those from northern Jiangsu of poor rural origin, with limited education, primarily occupied the unskilled service sector as coolies and sanitation workers, if they did not become beggars.

After these first two waves, the population in Shanghai was 3.7 million in 1935, among which there were also tens of thousands of foreign residents, making the city truly cosmopolitan. Great Britain, the United States, France, and the Chinese Republic all had some jurisdiction over certain parts of the city, a hybrid government overseeing a transnational population. Just as Chinese migrants from various parts of the country found their way to the city, by 1932, some 48,000 foreigners representing fifty different nationalities lived in Shanghai. In addition, there were anywhere from 25,000 to 50,000 White Russians, who had fled the Bolshevik Revolution (Dong, 2000:224).

It was not until the third wave during the Anti-Japanese War (1937-45), which the West knows as the Second World War, that the urban population swelled again. On August 12th 1937, the Japanese advance fleet of twenty-six warships moved down the Huangpu River, which is the major waterway in Shanghai, connecting the Yangtze River to the East China Sea. On August 14th, remembered ominously in the annals of Shanghai as “Bloody Saturday”, hundreds of thousands of residents from urban areas controlled by the Republic of China and Shanghai’s outlying countryside poured into the foreign concessions. Over the next two months, bitter fighting took place in and around Shanghai, which drove hundreds of thousands more refugees into the foreign
settlements (Dong, 2000:254). This resulted in a combined population increase for the International Settlement and the French Concession of 780,000 (Zhu, Liu & Chen, 2008:9). Shortly after, during the Liberation War (the Chinese Civil War between the Kuomintang Party and the Chinese Communist Party, 1946-49), the fourth wave came to Shanghai. This enormous migration brought more than two million people. Starting from kaibu in 1843, the four big waves of migrations into Shanghai by and large resulted from wars. Thus, it was haven becoming home for current Shanghaiiren’s parents and grandparents.

In less than a century, the migrant city of Shanghai grew from a node in the network of towns in the Yangtze River Delta, to a treaty port and home for those seeking fortune or refuge from home and abroad. Geographically, politically, economically, and culturally significant in China’s contemporary history, Shanghai under the Chinese Communist Party’s population control policies experienced severe decline of migration influx. Those policies enacted shortly after the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 institutionally created an urban population with Shanghai hukou.

**During the Maoist Era**

The restrictions on internal migration were measures to facilitate the planned economy mode that dominated Mainland China until the emergence of the “Open Policy” in 1978 that aimed to establish a market economy under the Chinese Communist Party’s rule. In the early 1950s, regulations were adopted to control population flows, in order to re-establish urban public order after years of warfare, to facilitate agricultural production, and to regulate resource allocation (Lu, 2002:124). Using an indicator called mechanical population growth,⁹ which is calculated by

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⁹ It is also an indicator used by National Bureau of Statistics of the People’s Republic of China and its regional division to track internal migration.
subtracting those moving out of an urban area from those moving in, we can see the trend of immigration decline in Shanghai since 1952 (See Figure 2.2). The volatile pattern in the 1950s resulted from food shortages in urban areas, which triggered later population control measures (Chen, 2011:101). The spike in the number of immigrants in mid-1970s is due to the return of Shanghai youth who were sent down to the countryside against their will during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). I will explain it in more detail later.

Figure 2.2: Mechanical Population Change in Shanghai, 1952-2012. Data source: Shanghai Statistic Yearbooks.

The passing of the Household Registration (*Hukou*) Regulation in 1958 led to a decline in both the numbers entering and leaving Shanghai, until both decreases came to a halt in 1967. The 1958 Hukou Registration later became the legal basis of restriction and control of geographical movement, and for monitoring and limiting any individual’s claim to social resources. This regulation was intended to stabilize population movement, with the effect of strictly limiting the
ability of rural workers to find non-agricultural work in cities (Lu, 2002:125). This essentially created a de facto internal passport system (Chan, 1994:91).

The spike on the chart in 1979 represents the return of native Shanghairens forced to leave the city during the first three years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Though essentially a struggle within the party for the next generation of leadership after Mao, this period resulted in a nationwide movement to forcefully relocate high school students and urban youth to collective farms in rural and periphery areas to learn from peasants, instead of advancing academically. Nationwide, 40 million youth participated, most involuntarily, in this “go up to the mountains, go down to the countryside” (shangshan xiaxiang) political movement. Towards the end of the Cultural Revolution, measures were issued by the central state to allow many of displaced urban youth to return to their hukou location. They either took over their parents’ jobs, found other sorts of entry-level urban occupations, or were admitted into colleges. The higher education system, halted during the Cultural Revolution period, reopened for the first post-revolution cohort in 1977. Therefore, the mechanical population change from the late 1960s to the end of 1970s is a story of zero-sum gain, which depicts a generation of native Shanghairens driven out of, and after many years, allowed back into their hometown.

The population data I compiled for this chart from yearbooks published by the Shanghai Statistical Bureau represent Shanghai hukou population. As explained in the introduction, hukou status introduced in 1958 was essential for a Chinese citizen’s everyday life, determining food rations, healthcare, employment, and even criminal records during the Maoist era; thus, when the hukou system was strictly implemented nationwide, the hukou population could serve as the proxy for the city’s population. During this thirty year period Shanghai was not a migrant city, and should not be understood as such, due to hukou status prohibiting voluntary geographical mobility.
New Migrants

The migration situation in Shanghai started to change after the 1992 Tour of the South (nanxun) of then Party Secretary, Deng Xiaoping. Despite the “Opening Policy” that was issued in 1978, economic reforms did not reach Shanghai in large measure until after that tour. Lu notes that the central government saw social stability, built through household registration system, as a prerequisite for economic development in the early years of economic reform (2002:127). To control the population growth in cities and towns, the State Council issued a regulation about hukou status on November 1st, 1977; it stated that non-local hukou holders and the unemployed should return to their hukou locations, in particular to rural regions; these migrants being the result of the chaos of the Cultural Revolution. It was not until the Shanghai Blue-stamp Hukou Temporary Management Regulations (Shanghaishi Lanyin Hukou Guangli Zhanxing Guiding), which went into effect on February 1st, 1994, that Shanghai systematically allowed migrants without Shanghai hukou to settle in Shanghai.

Economic development in Shanghai and further local amendment of the hukou system are inextricably linked from this point forward. Local migration regulations were allowed by the central state, and devised by the Municipal Government of Shanghai to circumvent national hukou restrictions to meet the labor force demand, and to build Shanghai into China’s global city.

The first clause of the 1994 regulation explains that its purpose is to fulfill the needs of establishing a socialist market economy, and to manage temporary residents from outside Shanghai. Instead of the red stamp used on native Shanghairen’s hukou booklet, between 1994 and 2002, internal migrants received a blue stamp, which listed their birthplace. The reasons for the lack of a significant increase in the migrant population in Shanghai after this new regulation are the difficulty migrants experienced acquiring it and the high costs involved (See Figure 2.2). For each
blue-stamp *hukou*, applicants originated from elsewhere in China were required to invest at least one million yuan. In addition, those private investors would need to have already established lawful long-term residence in Shanghai before submitting the application. Each additional blue stamp *hukou*, for example for spouse or children, cost the same as the original.

Other ways to apply for a blue stamp *hukou* included application through employers or through the purchase of market-rate housing of more than 100 square meters. Termed “flexible circulation” of talents, the blue stamp *hukou* is comparable to current international practices of “technical immigration” and “investment immigration”. By the end of 2000, Shanghai had approved nearly 30,000 individuals for blue stamp *hukou*. Among these, 20,000 were granted the permit by purchasing market-rate housing (Kang, 2002:62). Simply put, those able to acquire blue stamp *hukou* in Shanghai belonged to the newly rising elite group, comprised of domestic entrepreneurs, the highly educated, and the highly skilled. However, they represent only a small portion of internal migrants in Shanghai.

The majority of internal migrants were less-educated and low-skilled temporary laborers, whose status as wage labor echoed that of migrants arriving in the first half of the twentieth century. With neither a red stamp, nor a blue stamp on their household registration booklet, this migrant population is not included in the Shanghai hukou population chart (Figure 2.2). To a certain extent, they are invisible on paper, even though they supply the majority of the low-end labor force.

To manage them, the Shanghai Municipal Government enacted the Shanghai Floating Population Management Regulation (*Shanghaishi Wailai Liudong Renyuan Guangli Tiaoli*), on January 1st, 1997. The tone of this regulation is rather different from the one issued to welcome the wealthy and the highly educated in 1994; that it sees the floating population as potential threat to the urban social order. The class difference addressed in this regulation compared to the one
issued in 1994 is also apparent, which is best illustrated in clauses about housing and work. The 1997 regulation contains no clause about housing purchases; rather, it contains detailed procedures for finding apartments and rental properties. On top of the temporary residency card, these floating non-natives needed to apply for a work permit to legally obtain employment in Shanghai. In terms of the work permit, one detail in the 1997 regulation exemplifies the type of jobs some migrants would find: a clause explaining how to obtain the work permit if one’s job was as a domestic worker. This is in sharp contrast to those non-natives eligible for a blue stamp hukou, who were supposed to be capable of investing at least one million yuan. More details on the job status of non-native migrants over the last two decades will be discussed in chapter five.

Both the 1994 and 1997 regulations were updated with new regulations issued in early 2000s; these constant changes reflect not only the extraordinary labor demands of redeveloping Shanghai as a global city (Chen, 2009), but also how closely the municipal government monitored and adjusted its population policy to facilitate the city’s economic development, and to address its social consequences. The rhetoric used to describe the purposes of the two regulations changed in the new versions, from the hesitant openness that characterized the 1994 and 1997 regulations to a full embrace of a migrant influx, though that welcoming tone remains contingent upon class. That is to say, for highly educated, skilled, and wealthy migrants, the purpose of the regulation focuses on their potential contribution to the city; and to those less-educated, of low skill level and rural background, the purpose of the regulation indicates more social service.

The Temporary Regulation on the Shanghai Residency Permit for Imported Talent (yinjin rencai shixing shanghaishi juzhuzheng zhidu zhanxing guiding), which went into effect on April 30th, 2002, explicitly aims to facilitate the flow of talent, to encourage employment, investment, and to enhance the city’s overall competitiveness. This 2002 regulation made a bachelor degree or
higher an eligibility requirement for a Shanghai Residency Permit. It also explicitly states that the residency permit allows the holder to participate in the municipal’s social security system, hence enjoy its benefits.

Two years later, on August 30th, 2004, the Shanghai Residency Permit Temporary Regulation (shanghaishi juzhuzheng zhanxing guiding) went into effect. This regulation expanded on the 2002 temporary regulation, applying to less educated migrants. The stated purpose of this regulation differs from its antecedent; rather than bolstering the city’s competitiveness or enhancing Shanghai’s status as a global city, as declared in Clause 1, this regulation was designed to “protect the legal rights of those coming to Shanghai, to standardize and digitalize population management, and to improve governmental services”. This regulation extends legal residency and employment to the less educated and less skilled population, predominantly of rural origin (79.4% of the newcomers according to the 2010 census). Two surveys conducted by the Shanghai Statistical Bureau in 2000 and 2003 showed that more than half of the non-hukou population in Shanghai had a middle school education or lower, and only 10% had completed high school (Zhu, Liu & Chen, 2008:18). Thus, the early 2000s regulations institutionally provided a more welcoming environment for the majority of the migrant labor.

The blue stamp hukou and later residency permit system created by the Shanghai Municipal Government have bypassed the national hukou system, and brought an influx of internal migrants to Shanghai who are vital for the city’s participation in economic globalization. A close reading of the four regulations reveals that non-natives entering Shanghai are allotted very different levels of governmental support and service based on socioeconomic status. Those who are less educated are called job seekers (jiuye) or business owners; those who are highly educated, skilled, and wealthy belong to a category called imported talent (yinjin rencai), who either obtain blue stamp hukou or
fall under the “talent” category in their official dossier. Other than domestic entrepreneurs, these two groups are similar to the polarized labor force that Sassen characterizes in global cities: the highly educated and wealthy work predominantly in Fortune 500 companies and in tertiary industries, while laborers with limited education work in the service sector (1991). Recent migration policies brought in both of these groups, and included measures for them to stay for the long term in a globalizing Shanghai.

With millions of residency permit holders legally living and working in the city, the number of *hukou* holders is not sufficient to capture the population size of Shanghai. In a report published by the Shanghai Statistical Bureau in 2006, the *hukou* population in Shanghai was 13.6 million; however, the actual number of residents in Shanghai, including the *hukou* population, those having residency permits, and the temporary floating population, was more than 19.2 million. 10 This demonstrates the weakening of *hukou* status in terms of urban legal residency and entitlement to social services, that the non-*hukou* population was already accounted for one third of the urban population in 2005. More importantly, this discrepancy indicates the globalizing Shanghai is no longer a place under rigid population control as in the Maoist era, but entering a phase of cosmopolitanism.

The juxtaposition of the fifth and sixth censuses, conducted in 2000 and 2010, further demonstrates the migrant city identity of Shanghai. In 2010, the *hukou* population and long-term non-*hukou* residents were a little more than 23 million, increased from 16.7 million in 2000. 11 In 2010, of 23 million people in Shanghai, almost 9 million were recent migrants. According to the

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2000 census, of Shanghai’s 16.7 million residents, 3.5 million were migrants.\textsuperscript{12} This figures indicate that 87% of the population growth over the first decade of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century in Shanghai was due to internal migration.

Such enormous population increase, over such a short period of time, is the result of measures taken by Shanghai’s municipal government to overcome labor shortages in constructing Shanghai into a world-class financial center and global city. According to the 2010 census, almost half of the non-\textit{hukou} population was between ages of 20 and 34, exceeding their Shanghai-\textit{hukou} counterparts by 7.7%, making the former group the majority of the labor force.\textsuperscript{13} The city grants the permit holders social services once provided only to native Shanghairen such as housing, schooling for children, pension plans, health insurance, and loans for housing and vehicle purchases. Through these measures, the privilege once associated exclusively with Shanghai \textit{hukou} was extended to those recent migrants, the social impact of which will be elaborated in chapter five.

After twenty years of using regulations to circumvent national \textit{hukou} restrictions to build Shanghai into China’s global city, the municipal government of Shanghai eventually replaced the 2002 and 2004 temporary residency permit regulations with Regulations on Shanghai Residency Permit, which came into effect on July 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2013. This law continues the measures to protect internal migrants’ legal rights, to standardize population management, and to enhance governmental services in facilitation of economic, social, and environmental development. In addition, the criteria for application is streamlined to require only legal employment, lawful residence and more than six months of contribution to social security.


Compared to the rigid requirements for a blue stamp *hukou* in 1994, the requirements for a residency permit in 2013 were significantly less. Moreover, the Experimental Measure for Residency Permit Holders to Apply for Shanghai *Hukou*, issued on February 12th, 2009, offered a new opportunity. This new regulation offered to those holding a residency permit for seven years, during which time they continuously contributed to social security and paid income tax, the ability to obtain a Shanghai *hukou*. On the one hand, this rewards migrants who have contributed to building a globalizing Shanghai a permanent legal status; but on the other hand, it muddles the definition of Shanghairen since *hukou* has long been a definitive and exclusive indicator of Shanghairen identity based on birthplace.

Those who lived through the Maoist era in Shanghai, when the *hukou* system rigidly controlled geographical mobility and resource allocation, nowadays firmly assert and defend their Shanghairen identity and its associated social privilege and status. However, they are themselves children of earlier migrants, many of whom arrived in Shanghai only a generation before. A police officer in his late 40s, a university professor in his late 50s, and a retired entrepreneur in his early 60s, all told me that they were not really *by origin* Shanghairen. Though each was born and grew up in Shanghai, their parents originated in Shandong, Hebei, and Jiangsu provinces respectively. It was such a cosmopolitan metropolis tolerating differences and promising upward mobility that drew the parents of the police officer, professor, and entrepreneur to Shanghai in the early 20th century. Now that Shanghai again participates in the global economy, its economic development demands and accommodates millions of migrants, who will contribute to a new kaleidoscope of cosmopolitan Shanghai.

In the past, flows of migrants brought fortune, opportunity, and tension to the city, beginning with the first day of the “Opening Treaty Port”. Just as important, the birth of the “Paris
of the Orient” was also the result of foreign settlers’ greed and Chinese sovereigns’ vulnerability in Shanghai. Imprinted in the contour of the city and the built environment is the sociospatial hierarchy of urban neighborhoods. Resulting from the colonial era’s segregated jurisdictions, the mental mapping of the cosmopolitan Shanghai has always been divided along socioeconomic and cultural boundaries.

A Divided Landscape

The divided urban landscape of Shanghai was a story of East meets West; but more importantly, a story of rezoning and urban expansion, starting from the previously rural land outside of the walled county seat after kaibu. Similar to the migration history in Shanghai, the forces shaping and dividing the cosmopolitan landscape have been mostly foreign, but the population involved have largely been Chinese. During Shanghai’s semi-colonial era, the International Settlement, which occupied the area surrounding the walled county seat, in the northeastern part of the city on the waterfront, was under British and United States rule, with street names such as Avenue Edward VII, after the son of Queen Victoria. Located southwest of the city center was the French Concession, with street names such as Avenue Joffre, named after a French general of the First World War. The divided jurisdiction transformed Shanghai into a cosmopolitan metropolis with a diverse built environment and urban culture.

The settlement boundaries functioned as means of social segregation from the time of their establishment, and the divide later translated into what was called an upper/lower corner distinction. Those with modern, upscale, Western-looking housing in central and southwestern areas of the city were called upper-corner (shangzhijiao), while those shantytowns and low-end alleyway housing in the working class north and northeastern part of the city were deemed lower-
corner (xiazhijiao). After the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, despite the Communist Party’s condemnation of capitalist consumption and lifestyle, the lack of new housing and neglect to urban infrastructure in the Maoist era reinforced the distinction between upper/lower corners in the minds of millions of Shanghairen.

This dichotomy inherited from the colonial era has influenced Shanghairesn’s housing choices, geosocial mobility and place-bound identity throughout the 20th century, until a competing new divide emerged in the economic reform era. Pudong, rural land located east of the Huangpu River, was rezoned to be part of urban Shanghai in 1993. The new Shanghai since then is divided by the Huangpu River; on the west bank was the city imbued with the vicissitudes of a century and a half of colonial occupation, civil war, cosmopolitan culture, waves of internal migration and class struggles under the Communist Party rule, on the east bank, land that was rural two decades ago is now crowded with skyscrapers ready to become a global city in the 21st century. The divided landscape in Shanghai tells a story of power and capital, on a global scale.

Semi-Colonial Era

Shanghai stands 15 miles south of the mouth of the Yangtze River, facing the East China Sea. The two wealthy neighbouring provinces, Jiangsu to the north and Zhejiang to the south, have been famous for a millennia for producing and trading silk and tea. The county seat, later to become the so-called “Chinese City” during the treaty port period, and Nanshi district after 1949, sat close to the intersection of two important waterways, the Huangpu River and Suzhou Creek, which provided access to the sea and the hinterland respectively. Though well positioned for trade, Shanghai remained merely a dot on the fringe of the empire, geographically as well as politically
(Zhao, 2004:51), not in a position to compete with much famous old cities such as Suzhou, or Hangzhou in the region.

Under the Treaty of Nanjing (1843), Britain, France and the United States—each employing a different strategy and of varying appetite—carved up thousands of acres of farmland outside the county seat’s wall. On November 29th 1845, the British Consul George Balfour and the Shanghai Daotai (circuit intendant) Gong Mujiu ratified the first ‘Land Regulations’ abiding by the Treaty. In effect, this ratification expedited the creation of a British settlement officially recognized by the Qing Dynasty of China in 1846 (Zhao, 2004:53). The original British Settlement was established on a rectangular plot of land at the intersection of the Huangpu River, Suzhou Creek, and Yang Jin Bang Creek. Yang Jin Bang Creek would later become a shared border with the French Concession.

The three-part divided landscape of Shanghai of the colonial era came into being when a lengthy negotiation between the French Consul Louis Montigny and the Shanghai Daotai Lin Gui in 1849 led to the French acquisition of land for the exclusive use of French nationals (Zhao, 2004:53). The 164 acre French Concession was bound to the south by the moat of the Chinese City, to the north by the Yang Jin Bang creek also bordering the British Settlement, and to the east by the Huangpu River. Over the years, the French Concession expanded, and in 1900 reached 358 acres. On April 8th, 1914 the French authorities obtained a 2,470 acres expansion, marking their most significant expansion yet (Denison & Ren, 2006:82, 85).

The United States joined the scene shortly after the French and quickened the expansion of settlements. In contrast to the British and French negotiations, the American Settlement grew from the American consul John N. Alsop Griswold’s protest against the creation of the French Concession and the existence of the French’s exclusive privileges and rights (Bergère, 2009:31-2).
Without any formal designation of land, an American Settlement started to grow near the small port where Suzhou Creek joined the Huangpu River. In 1863, that area was combined with the British Settlement to become the International Settlement (Denison & Ren, 2006:56). With ever-increasing business opportunities and rising number of both foreign and Chinese residents, the foreign community required the extension of settlements from the Chinese authority. In May 1899 the International Settlement was extended from 1,779 acres to 5,583 acres (Denison & Ren, 2006:75). When the Qing Dynasty collapsed in 1911, the total area of Shanghai’s foreign settlements reached more than 8,043 acres, an area almost fifty-eight times larger than the first British Settlement established in 1846, and twelve times larger than the original walled Chinese City (Zhao, 2004:53). That is to say, urban Shanghai was largely under the foreign rule, and it was

Figure 2.3: Establishment and expansion of foreign settlements in Shanghai (source: Lu Hanchao, 1999).
indeed the imperialist powers gave birth to the cosmopolitan city. Figure 2.3 shows the size and expansion of the foreign settlements in Shanghai.

Upon the establishment of foreign settlements, the landscape of Shanghai was not only divided but also segregated. The first Land Regulation of 1845 signed by the Qing Dynasty and British officials stated that the special international territories were reserved for foreigners only. The pool of foreigners was comprised mainly of diplomats, traders, and missionaries and their servants and families (Zhao, 2004:54). Chinese citizens were forbidden to live on this land, and both foreigners and Chinese were prohibited from building houses to rent to Chinese people (Denison & Ren, 2006:34). However, economic incentives quickly eroded this segregation when migration waves hit. The force of urban political economy to reshape the urban landscape was omnipresent from the beginning of the history of Shanghai.

From the early days of settlements, urban residence in Shanghai had already been manipulated by profit-driven local elites. British merchants, led by Edwin Smith, convinced the three consuls to admit into the foreign settlements those Chinese seeking refuge from the Taiping Rebellion by appealing to the values of profit and efficiency that united the foreign settlers (Lu, 1999:32-5). Soon the segregation policy was officially abandoned. Shanghai’s foreign settlements were transformed from reserves for foreign residents, to Western-run municipalities predominately populated by Chinese.

In place of settlement borders, a new divide of urban landscape emerged; the upper-corner/lower-corner distinction has become the new set of internal boundaries within the city. These boundaries overlap the settlement borders in some places, with the northeastern part of the International Settlement and lands under the Chinese rule outside of the settlements being the lower corner, and southwestern and central of both settlements being the upper-corner.
This divide was not necessarily based on land value. Rather, housing quality, social environment, and the socioeconomic status of inhabitants all contributed to the socially constructed upper/lower corner distinction. Figure 2.4 is a map of Shanghai land values in 1926, which demonstrates that land values within settlements, in particular those near the waterfront were the highest and, regardless of jurisdiction, land value declines the further one gets from the city center. From the perspective of land value, this map refutes the conventional perception that upper corner means the southwestern part of the city, and lower means the northeastern. The persistence of this perception among Shanghairens expresses more a mental mapping of urban neighborhood hierarchy than actual land values. It also indicates that there are elements other than land value itself that explain symbolic value embedded in the geosocial hierarchy of neighborhoods in Shanghai.

First of these elements was housing quality, which differentiated life quality and lifestyle in the two corners. Beginning in the 1870s, two kinds of alleyway (lilong) housing were built to

![Figure 2.4: Map of land value zones in greater Shanghai, 1926. Source: Brooke, J.T.W., and R.W. Davis. (1927). The China Architects and Builders Compendium.](image)

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accommodate groups of different socioeconomic status. The lower quality alleyway housing was **shikumen**. Its defining feature was a courtyard behind a heavy wooden gate (**kumen**) wrapped in stone (**shi**). The other was the new style **lilong** housing with relatively modern amenities. From the 1910s to the 1930s, a period of westward expansion of both the International Settlement and the French Concession, the new-style **lilong** housing, with electricity and other modern amenities such as steel-framed windows and waxed floors, experienced rapid growth. Compared to its antecedent **shikumen** housing, which lacked even indoor plumbing, **lilong** housing added an attic, an additional floor above the kitchen, and service rooms. Both kinds of alleyway housing reached their greatest numbers between the 1920s and 1940s, in the development of modern Shanghai (Zhao, 2004:50). Their dominance of Shanghai’s urban landscape continued until the massive demolition and redevelopment brought about by the economic reforms starting in the late 1990s.

For those unable to afford **shikumen** housing, straw and bamboo shacks were erected on land beyond the northern border of the International Settlement in Zhabei and Baoshan County under Chinese control (See Figure 2.3, and “Chapei” and “Paoshan” in Figure 2.4). In 1929, Shanghai had an estimated 21,000 such makeshift hovels housing the most desperate classes (Denison & Ren, 2006:165). In the eastern part of the International Settlement were also factories and mills, which drew a constant flow of rural migrants, who lived in shantytowns and **shikumen** housing nearby. This concentration of low-end housing and its working class inhabitants gave the area the name lower corner.

In contrast, better quality housing such as new style **lilong** and villas were more commonly seen in upper corner, comprised of the central parts of the International Settlement and the French Concession. For the middle class population and clerks of higher ranks, garden **lilongs** and apartment **lilongs** were built (Lu, 1999:110-12; Zhao, 2004:65). Living standards in those new
style *lilong* housing were improved in a number of ways, including the incorporation of bathrooms, toilets, utility rooms, and the introduction of electricity, hot water, and gas. Instead of a courtyard behind a heavy wooden gate, most new style *lilong* housing enjoyed an open or semi-open green space in the front. Garden *lilong* introduced in the 1930s already bore the appearance of a terraced town house (Denison & Ren, 2006:163-64), vastly better than shantytowns, though still short of quality and status when comparing to Western-style villas.

The upper corner was also the home of the local and national elite. Wealthy foreign residents and Chinese businessmen acquired land and built magnificent villas and mansions with exquisite gardens in the expanded western part of the International Settlement and the French Concession. The western section was famous for its prestigious inhabitants, for example, from 1918 to 1924, the founder of Kuomintang (the Chinese Nationalist Party that now rules Taiwan) and the first president of the Republic of China (1912-1949) Sun Yatsen and his wife Song Qingling maintained a residence on 29 Rue Molière in the French Concession. The western district of the International Settlement, similar to the western part of the French Concession, was known for its sumptuous Western style garden houses (*xishi yangfang*) (Denison & Ren, 2006:165,167). The largest and most luxurious of these, Aili Garden, belonged to Silas Hardoon, a Sephardic Jew from Iraq who moved to Shanghai to seek fortune, and was once believed to be the richest man in Asia.

In general, housing types and the socioeconomic status of their inhabitants explain the upper/lower corner divide in Shanghai over the first half of 20th century. The best housing (Western-style villas, modern apartments, and new style *lilong* houses) was located in the western and southwestern part of the city, while the poorest housing (single-story houses and straw huts/shacks) gathered in the north and north-east. Housing in between these two extremes (the
shikumen) was scattered all over Shanghai proper (Lu, 1999:115). Furthermore, the divide also indicates the differentiation between the designated function and social environment of each of the two corners of the city. Those areas representing industrial production and its impoverished labor force were grouped together as the lower corner which was hidden behind the glistening surface of Shanghai; while the upper corner flaunted its conspicuous consumption, luxury, and leisure.

After examining the elements that constructed the upper/lower corner distinction, it is apparent that this divide would remain in place, even when official divisions between foreign settlements and Chinese areas ceased to exist in 1943 during the Second World War, or upon the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. Even when Mao determined the country to be a People's Democratic Dictatorship (renmin mingzhuzhuangzheng) under the leadership of the proletariat, the predominantly working class neighborhoods were still referred to as the “lower corner”.

This upper/lower corner distinction continued to follow Shanghairen like a shadow, well into the latter half of the 20th century. It defines the desired path of their geo-economic mobility, and explains the grievance of displacement from the prestigious upper-corner. Up until the 1990s, even if they occupied only one room in a shikumen housing unit, if that low end dwelling was located in the upper corner, a Shanghairen family would have enough pride and confidence to look down on people of the lower corner even if the latter enjoyed a more spacious dwelling.

**Transition of the Upper/Lower Corner Divide**

The nationalization and redistribution of urban housing soon after the liberation in May 1949 inherited the upper/lower corner divide, and over time, has strengthened its symbolic power. During the Maoist era, rather than urban political economy, changes to the urban landscape
followed a political agenda. Nationalization of housing ownership was carried out through confiscation, coercion and forced revocation of property rights, to prove the owners’ allegiance to the new Communist government (Denison & Ren, 2006:205). Afterwards, most houses built before 1949 were taken over by local housing authorities, in effect rendering all residents in the city tenants of the state.

In the process of housing redistribution, working class families were relocated into pre-liberation era middle-/upper-class neighborhoods. These initiatives were intended to better the living conditions of the working class. Consequentially, they created more socioeconomically heterogeneous neighborhoods in Shanghai, though these measures ultimately failed to alter the upper/lower corner distinction. The strength of this divide was especially notable when we consider the fact that the finest residences previously occupied by the upper or upper-middle class of both foreign and Chinese origins in the upper corner were taken over by high-ranking government officials and party bureaucrats.

The urban landscape in Shanghai saw little development or maintenance, and the distinction prevailed in the three decades after 1949 even though overcrowding plagued the two corners indiscriminately. At the time of the liberation in May 1949, Shanghai’s housing stock was comprised of 52.7% old lilong houses (shikumen housing), 19.8% new lilong houses, 13.7% temporary shacks, 9.5% garden villas and 4.3% apartments (Denison & Ren, 2006:202; Xu, 2004:128-9). As we can see, nearly three quests of the urban residential housing stock was lilong housing, of either new or old type. Using the usual arrangement of lilong housing as example, I will illustrate the high density and overcrowded-ness in urban Shanghai at that time.

Initially, a lilong housing complex was built on one acre of land, and 120 units would house 600 residents, but in reality the density was much higher. Only in rare cases could one family
afford to occupy one entire two-story *lilong* unit. Instead, the tenant family, almost without exception, would sublet the extra space to poorer families, artists and students, to supplement household income (Lu, 1999:20; Zhao, 2004:59). Families of lower financial means had little choice but to cram into one room, with a shared kitchen and bathroom (if any) under the secondary rental system, sometimes for decades. According to the 1937 Shanghai Municipal Council Report, in the International Settlement, where most *lilong* housing neighborhoods were located, more than 86% of families lived in this way in one house, with family numbers ranging from two to nine. A concentration of four families, or twenty-four persons, per house was the norm in these neighborhoods. When calculated at the individual level, each person was allotted an average 2.8 square meters or 9.5 cubic meters (Zhao, 2004:67). Those numbers further prove that residency in the upper corner did not necessarily mean spacious dwelling in upscale housing. The appeal of the upper corner lies predominantly in the proximity to the urban center, cultural amenities, and consumption space.

When economic reforms and large-scale urban redevelopments reached Shanghai in the 1990s; the upper/lower corner distinction was further strengthened it. Most of the *lilong* and villa housing units in the previous upper corner were demolished, in their place, modern office towers and luxurious condominiums dominate the skyline. The desirability of those urban central land was incorporated in the urban growth machine in raising land value, and in fabricating a cosmopolitan image of central Shanghai. This upper/lower corner divide on the one hand helped real estate developers to reap more profit, on the other hand, intensified the sense of loss among displaced and dispossessed Shanghairen in the urban redevelopment process, which I will elaborate on in chapter four.
Shanghai’s departure since the 1990s from the urban center, especially with the demolition of old *lilong* housing, was a story of exodus under the force of urban governance involving foreign and domestic capital, the central, municipal and district governments. And again, transformation of this cosmopolitan space affected mostly Chinese, who became property owners after decades of leasing from the government.

Redevelopment in the economic reform era treated sitting tenants quite differently from the earlier period. Sitting tenants affected by redevelopment projects between the 1950s and 1980s were offered new rental housing units in the old neighborhood after a temporary relocation, or new rental housing in another area if they preferred not to wait. The terms of their relocation were mediated and arranged through their work units and local housing administration bureau, which owned the housing since property nationalization in the 1950s. To quicken the redevelopment of the city in the 1990s, four alternative funding mechanisms arose, all inviting the participation of private developers.

Of the four alternatives, three allowed displaced tenants to move into new property in their old neighborhoods. The funding pool for these three approaches were a combination of funds from private developers, district governments, displaced tenants, and the work units the majority of the tenants in a particular neighborhood belonged to. While these approaches abided by the intentions of the initial contracts that allowed moving back, the fourth, which did not, was more popular. This fourth approach, fittingly called “Commercial Housing Operation” (*shangpingfang jingying*), was a process by which developers leased land from the municipal government upon which stood straw and mud shacks or *lilong* housing. In those cases, all sitting tenants were relocated with no prospect of moving back and the whole neighborhood were demolished (Xu, 2004:167-71).

While the 1991 housing policy required developers to provide ready permanent housing to
those displaced, the 1997 relocation and compensation policy suggested two options to handle those who lost their homes. Besides providing permanent housing, the new option was to provide monetary compensation, to allow the displaced to purchase housing on the market. The tiers of monetary compensation were defined by the Shanghai Municipal Housing Security and Administration Bureau, and paid to the displaced by developers. The sum was usually not enough for units in secondary market apartment buildings in the same neighborhood, and counted only a fraction of the market price for the new ones soon to rise from where their old dwelling once stood.

As a result, former tenants were mostly relocated to the cheaper and less desirable lower corner or the Pudong New District across the Huangpu River. For example, the Songbai Alley neighborhood in the central Huangpu District (See Figure 2.5) was categorized as “dangerous” (wei fang) and “ripe” for redevelopment. Eighty percent of former residents were relocated to Pudong New District (Shanghai Construction 1986-1990, cited in Xu, 2004:162-64). The depopulation of the central city was intensified in a new round of old lilong neighborhood redevelopment projects from 2001 to 2004. The overall rate of return among previous residents in that round of redevelopment remained around 10 percent, at the city average level (Xu, 2004:202-04).

Redevelopment of shantytowns and shikumen lilong housing neighborhoods in central Shanghai was only part of the story of massive urban renewal and displacement rippling through the city. The revenue generated by leasing land occupied with lilong housing or shacks in central districts such as Luwan or Huangpu to real estate developers was later used to modernize the

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decaying urban infrastructure of the city. The building frenzy of the 1990s changed the city at a rate rarely seen in urban history; the authorities had to print a new version of the city map every three months on average (shijie ribao, Nov.28th, 1999, cited in Lu, 2002:169). Within ten years, elevated freeways including the inner ring, the north-south, and the east-west Yan’an Road were erected, freeways that cut through the heart of central Shanghai and destroyed lilong neighborhoods of tens of thousands of households. For example, in an effort to make space for the north-south elevated freeway in 1995, nearly 20,000 households and 916 business had to leave their former locations (Kang, 2002: 207-08).

In the process of dramatic urban landscape change, millions were displaced, from Huangpu, Jing’an and Luwan districts, which are located within the boundaries of previous settlements and comprised of the upper corner to lower corner districts such as Putuo, Yangpu, and Xuhui (See Figure 2.5 for the district map). Others were displaced to rezoned rural areas such as Minhang, Jiading, and Songjiang. Figure 2.6 shows a district level population change, using census data from

Figure 2.5: 2010 Shanghai District Map
Source: Shanghai Municipal Government, modified by author.
Three central districts of the eighteen total districts in Shanghai had the most significant decreases in population. The Huangpu district, at 35% (or 232,100 persons) has the highest decrease, followed by the Jing’an District at 31% (111,300 persons), and the Luwan District at 30% (107,200 persons). From these three core districts in the inner city, residents moved to the furthest periphery districts which were previously rural, before the city rezoned them as urban. The “new” urban districts of Songjiang, Minhang, Jiading, Qingpu, Fengxian, and Pudong New District saw sharp population increases during the same time span. The most significant population increase was in Pudong, which over ten years’ span, saw a population increase of over 3.4 million. Since

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>2000 Census</th>
<th>2010 Census</th>
<th>Population Change 2000 – 2010 Unit: 10k</th>
<th>Population Change in Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huangpu</td>
<td>66.18</td>
<td>42.97</td>
<td>-23.21</td>
<td>-35.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jing’an</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>24.67</td>
<td>-11.13</td>
<td>-31.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luwan</td>
<td>35.59</td>
<td>24.87</td>
<td>-10.72</td>
<td>-30.12%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Xuhui</td>
<td>86.77</td>
<td>108.52</td>
<td>21.75</td>
<td>25.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>60.49</td>
<td>69.06</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td>14.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putuo</td>
<td>84.27</td>
<td>128.88</td>
<td>44.61</td>
<td>52.94%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Zhabei</td>
<td>70.83</td>
<td>83.04</td>
<td>12.21</td>
<td>17.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hongkou</td>
<td>80.36</td>
<td>85.23</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yangpu</td>
<td>107.95</td>
<td>131.3</td>
<td>23.35</td>
<td>21.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minghang</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>243.12</td>
<td>177.72</td>
<td>271.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baoshan</td>
<td>80.95</td>
<td>190.56</td>
<td>109.61</td>
<td>135.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiading</td>
<td>48.64</td>
<td>147.2</td>
<td>98.56</td>
<td>202.63%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>73.25</td>
<td>20.24</td>
<td>38.18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Songjiang</td>
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<td>158.34</td>
<td>108.79</td>
<td>219.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qingpu</td>
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<td>108.19</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>135.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fengxian</td>
<td>50.42</td>
<td>108.41</td>
<td>57.99</td>
<td>115.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pudong New District</td>
<td>165.14*</td>
<td>504.73</td>
<td>339.59</td>
<td>205.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanhui</td>
<td>69.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chongming Island</td>
<td>65.36</td>
<td>70.34</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>7.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Total</td>
<td>1136.82</td>
<td>2302.66</td>
<td>1165.84</td>
<td>102.55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.6: Long term resident population change by district. Unit: 10k. On Aug.9, 2009, the previous Nanhui County was merged into Pudong New District, adding its 690,300 population to Pudong New District’s in 2010 data. Source: Shanghai Statistical Bureau.
the massive urban redevelopment and relocation in the 1990s, the divide between upper and lower corner gradually became secondary in Shanghairen’s mental mapping of the city.

The long held upper/lower corner divide was disintegrated when upscale condominiums were built in previous *shikumen* housing neighborhoods in the lower corner, and office towers came to dominate the skyline of the upper corner. This reconfiguration of the urban landscape resulted in many Shanghairen no longer living in either corner of the city. A further divide of the urban landscape emerged when Pudong New District was established across the Huangpu River in 1993. Prior to the urbanization and redevelopment of the 1990s, it was simply farmland. In the 2010 census, Pudong New District, once empty farm land, housed more than 5 million long term residents, roughly a quarter of the urban population.

The Huangpu River once defined the border of urban Shanghai. But since 1990s the river has served as a different kind of border within the city. Unlike the earlier borders between foreign settlements and the Chinese City, and the distinction between the so-called upper and lower corner, this new divide separates the Shanghai of the 20th century and the 21st century. What remain the same are the transfers of power and transactions of capital that define, transform, and strengthen the divided landscape of cosmopolitan Shanghai. Also transforming is the dialect of the city, which represents Shanghai’s cosmopolitan past in the same way as the migration story and the urban built environment.

**A Hybrid Language**

The dialect spoken in urban Shanghai bears the similar cosmopolitan character as the city’s population and the landscape. The Shanghai dialect came into its current shape roughly a century ago. Rooted in the Wu language, it has absorbed vocabularies from other regional dialects, as well
as foreign languages. Despite this hybrid nature, it has been spoken predominantly by internal migrants coming to the city, and regard themselves Shanghairen.

In the same time period that Shanghai grew from an insignificant river trading post in the Yangtze River Delta to a cosmopolitan metropolis, the Shanghai dialect, once a small branch of the Wu language family grew to be the mother tongue for millions of Shanghairen. From kaibu in 1843 until the mid-20th century, its expansion in vocabulary and cultural influence coincided with the city’s rise to a cosmopolitan metropolis embracing a diverse migrant population. Before delving into the recent changes and endangerment of the Shanghai dialect in later chapters, I will first trace the origin and development of the dialect over the last century and half, because to a certain extent, the story of the Shanghai dialect is at the core of the history of the city and its people.

The Shanghai dialect has been a particular point of tension in the recent transformations of the city. When native Shanghairen stress their place-bound identity through their fluency of the Shanghai dialect, they unavoidably confront and struggle with the fact that the dialect itself is not indigenous, but urban and hybrid. The dialect in its current form has always been in the making, constantly reshaped through the contemporary history of Shanghai, by multiple waves of migrants and power struggles between different migrant groups in the early 20th century.

The origin of the Shanghai dialect was as modest as the beginning of the town itself; accompanying the rise of the city, its significance in the region did not emerge until late 19th century. The dialect dates back to a language spoken in Huating County during the Song and Yuan Dynast (960—1368 AD); Huating County was renamed Songjiang County during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 AD) (Chen, 1992:106; You, 2006:75). In the Songjiang County record, published in 1512, Jiaxing dialect was the most respected and authoritative tongue within the county. At that time, the native tongue of Huating County was very similar in pronunciation to the
Jiaxing dialect (Xu & You, 1988:188). One hundred and fifty years later, in 1663, the early period of the Qing dynasty, the county record suggests that the Suzhou dialect occupied the leading position within the county. Its dominance continued for another one hundred and fifty years; in 1817 the county record affirms the Suzhou dialect as the dominant spoken language over the Shanghai dialect.

It was not until late 19th century that the prestige of the Shanghai dialect started to rise (Xu & You, 1988:189; Qian, 1998:32-3). The ancient dialect spoken in Songjiang County, to which the Shanghai Township historically belonged, is part of the northern Wu linguistic cluster. The Wu linguistic cluster dominates most of the Yangtze River Delta region and is one of the ten dialect clusters primarily used by Han Chinese. The linguistic characteristics of the contemporary Shanghai dialect, on the other hand, suggests its membership in the Su(Suzhou)-Hu(Shanghai)-Jia(Jiaxing) division of the Tai Lake sub-cluster of the northern Wu language (Chen, 1992:101; Qian, 1998:29). The ancient tongue, based on the Songjiang dialect and spoken by the population living in the county for hundreds of years before Shanghai began to ascend to its current status and size, is not the same Shanghai dialect that has been spoken in the city in the last hundred years. The contemporary Shanghai dialect spoken in urban areas is a younger dialect formed less than 100 years ago around the 1920s (Qian, 2006:72).

Though the historical origin is agreed upon, the composition of the current Shanghai dialect differs according to what linguistic facet linguists study: vocabulary (lexicon) or accent (phonology). Linguists parse the minute variations to determine the Shanghai dialect’s similarities to and diversions from its cousins in the Wu language family. The linguistic perspective on Shanghai’s growth and expansion provides clear examples of the cosmopolitan social environment in urban Shanghai in the early 20th century.
One thread of argument suggests that the dialect is primarily a conglomeration of dialects spoken by internal migrants pouring into the city after *kaibu* in 1843. Among Chinese linguists, the current Shanghai dialect is defined as a mixed urban dialect, with the Songjiang dialect as a basic tongue supplemented by words and phrases from the Wu language spoken in southern Jiangsu province and northern Zhejiang province (You, 2006:72, 75). This identification was already present in writings about the Shanghai dialect in the early 20th century. In a study first published in 1917, Yao categorized the origins of the Shanghai dialect under five headings: Cantonese, Ningpo dialect, Su cluster dialect (which he identified as spoken by gentry and landowners from Suzhou and southern Jiangsu region), northern tongue (which he identified as spoken in northeastern China), and Shanghai native tongue. The Shanghai native tongue was spoken by only a few genuine natives living in the southern and western rural areas of the county seat. According to Yao, the Shanghai dialect spoken commonly in the early 20th century was a mixture of Ningpo and Suzhou dialects, both of which were very different from the native tongue spoken before the 1843 treaty port opening (Yao, 1989[1917]:19). A Japanese scholar who quantified the influence of other dialects on the early 20th century urban Shanghai dialect offers a more precise account: at 75% the Suzhou pronunciation dominated; Ningpo was a distant second at 10%; Cantonese was merely 0.5%, and other tongues, including those from the impoverished northern Jiangsu province and other more inland and northern areas of China, offered a combined influence of 14.5% (Yingshan, 1928:702-3).

Tellingly, this breakdown of linguistic influences on the current Shanghai dialect corresponds to the socioeconomic status of the various migrants flowing into the city. Waves of wealthy war refugees of gentry and merchant origin, from the southern Jiangsu and northern Zhejiang provinces, represented the cities of Suzhou and Ningbo respectively. These groups
shaped the lingua franca of early 20th century Shanghai. The Suzhou dialect’s dominance in the region grew from that city’s literati’s cultural influences, while the Ningbo tongue’s influence was a product of its speakers’ economic advantages. Conversely, the tongue of the peasant refugees fleeing northern Jiangsu due to drought and war, who lacked both the cultural and the economic backing of wealthier Suzhou and Ningbo refugees, was unable to exert much influence at all in the formation of the Shanghai dialect (You, 2006:75). Furthermore, people in the southern Jiangsu province and the northern Zhejiang province spoke variations of the Wu language, while those peasant refugees spoke northern Jiangsu dialects, which belong to an entirely different linguistic family, which made them mutually incomprehensible (Honig, 1992:24).

In summary, scholars who study and describe the hybrid character of the Shanghai dialect recognize internal migration’s determining role in the composition of the current urban tongue. These scholars emphasize the geo-linguistic position of Shanghai, and find that the dialect received the most influence from the surrounding Suzhou and Ningbo areas also within the Wu linguistic region. For the most part, the current Shanghai dialect incorporates the pronunciations of Suzhou and Ningbo dialects; the northern Jiangsu dialect, despite a sizable migrant population in the city, has marginal influence (Honig, 1992:55). Following this line of arguments, the Shanghai dialect is a contemporary urban variation of the Wu language, with contributions from waves of internal migrants.

A counter argument in terms of Shanghai dialect’s origin stresses the unshakable root of the Songjiang dialect in the Shanghai dialect, arguing that other dialects, which accompanied hundreds of thousands of migrants into the city after 1843, canceled out each other’s influence on the Shanghai native tongue (Qian, 2003, 2006). Qian acknowledges the influences of Suzhou, Ningbo, and northern Jiangsu dialects represented by a substantial vocabulary, but rejects the
notion that any of them could challenge the dominance of the native Shanghai tongue in the early 20th century (2006:275). As a renowned Shanghai dialect scholar, and an outspoken Shanghai dialect preservation activist, Qian further suggests that earlier migrants were eager to learn the Shanghai dialect, and their offspring regarded the Shanghai dialect as their mother tongue, and themselves as Shanghairen (Qian, 2006).

Despite this disagreement, consensus is reached when Qian admits that current suburban tongues that are closely related to the Songjiang dialect are incomprehensible to contemporary Shanghai dialect speakers. This suggests that the Shanghai dialect is an urban language, and its development was closely associated with changes to the urban population in the early 20th century Shanghai. Furthermore, these debates regarding the origins and components of the Shanghai dialect among scholars are themselves presentations of language ideologies. I will discuss their implications in chapter three when focusing on the dialect preservation movement.

Shanghai’s turbulent political, social, and cultural history during the early 20th century had a profound effect on the Shanghai dialect. Many new words emerged during that period to accommodate social change, and to describe phenomena and goods new to urban Shanghai (Qian, 1998:33). The Shanghai dialect was not itself sufficient for a cosmopolitan population to maneuver through a city with separated jurisdictions and colonial dominance. Changes to the dialect were needed to facilitate communication, and to connect different populations in Shanghai. A hybrid language known as Pidgin English (or yangjingbang), originating in Canton in the early days of the China trade and composed of English, Chinese, Indian, and Portuguese words extended its influences on the fast-forming Shanghai dialect in the early 20th century (Dong, 2000:33).

New hybrid vocabularies ranging from the business world to the underworld flourished. For example, steamer got its Chinese name in Shanghai dialect as “si-ding-ba”, on sale turned into
“ang-san”, porter was “pao-tuo”, sofa “su-fa”, and the dialect word for prostitute was taken from lassie, “lah-sey” (Qian, 2007:101-02). More relevant to this study is the example of the word for the Western architectural feature, loft window. It was a feature adopted in shikumen housing, and its Chinese name was first given in the Shanghai dialect, “laofu-cang”. It borrows the half phonological and half semantic way in composing Mandarin characters by combining the pronunciation of “laofu”, mimicking the English pronunciation of “loft”, with “cang”, meaning window in the Shanghai dialect.

In general, Chinese linguists argue that the absorption of words or lexical items from Western languages, and the continuous creation of new words to accommodate the dynamic treaty-port business, signified the city’s open-mindedness and indiscriminate cosmopolitanism (Qian, 2000:66; Chen, 2012: i; Qian, 2012:8). However, we should never situate changes to a language in a political vacuum. Since the political environment is central to my study of the fate of the Shanghai dialect in the city’s transformation over the last two decades, I need to highlight that the hybridity of the dialect represents the city’s cosmopolitan past which was driven mostly by foreign forces, aided by the local’s business-minded pragmatism, and a migration population from other parts of China.

Changes to the Shanghai dialect after the founding of the People’s Republic took a slightly different form. Instead of words or accents from other regions or foreign countries, political turmoil and the planned economy contributed new words to the dialect such as “jia-ji-dou-zeng” (class struggle), or “che-da-gu-fan” (eating rice from the big wok), which connotes the collective mode of production and socialist redistribution. The close association between the internal migration and changes in the Shanghai dialect in early 20th century explains the period of stability
and stagnation of the dialect in the Maoist era (Qian, 1998:31-2), when the household registration system halted migration flows.

While the flow of internal migration resumed in the 2000s, and the city starts to regain its cosmopolitan character, the Shanghai dialect has yet to experience a revitalization, or it may never be. In the next chapter, I will delve into language policies since the 1950s to illustrate the national and local linguistic environment, the dominance of Putonghua, which is the official language of the People’s Republic of China, and the rapid decline of the Shanghai dialect in the last two decades.
Chapter Three:
“China Dream” versus Shanghai Dialect: The Impact of State Language Policies

On the evening of June 16th, 2009, I went to Pudong, the new face of Shanghai’s globalization located on the east bank of the Huangpu River, for a classical music concert. Though the subway ride from People’s Square, the center of downtown Shanghai in Puxi (west bank of the Huangpu River) took only 15 minutes, I was immediately lost after getting off at the Shanghai Science and Technology Museum station of Line 2. The recently urbanized and developed Pudong was a totally unfamiliar place to me, a native Shanghairen who had lived in Puxi for twenty-five years before moving to Canada. It bears little resembles to the Shanghai I once knew so well. My surprise and disorientation did not end when I arrived at the Shanghai Oriental Art Center. Upon purchasing the playbill for the concert performed by the United States’ National Symphony Orchestra, I said “thank you” in Shanghai dialect to the staff, but was ridiculed and jeered in return, “Seriously, Shanghai dialect? This is high culture, not standup comedy!” Native Shanghaires like me were raised to speak and treat the dialect as the native language of the city. But now I was shunned for speaking the Shanghai dialect in Shanghai. What happened? That shocking experience pointed to language as a new dimension for studying the urban transformation of globalizing Shanghai.

The Shanghai dialect has been the lingua franca of Shanghai since the early 20th century. The shift from the feudal Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), to the Republic era (1911-1949), and then to the People’s Republic founded by the Chinese Communist Party, did little to affect the Shanghai dialect’s primacy over the past century. It was not until the late 1990s, when economic reforms, and China’s deeper participation in globalization, set Shanghai on a trajectory to become a global city, that the Shanghai dialect’s standing was threatened by the official language, Putonghua, or
Standard Mandarin Chinese. To demonstrate the top-down cause of the dialect’s endangerment, I will first set the background of changes in the central state’s language policies since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, to demonstrate how the state has shifted emphasis from dialect co-existence to linguistic exclusiveness to build up the hegemony of the official language. The official language promotion project is a nationalist project, one that associates speaking Putonghua with patriotism, loyalty to the party and the state, and allegiance to a national identity. More recently, since 2012, speaking Putonghua has been connected with the realization of the “China Dream”, which was defined as a “rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” by Xi Jinping, the current president of China. In this sociohistorical context, state language policies to establish Putonghua’s dominance over regional dialects, such as the Shanghai dialect, reflect the Chinese leadership’s interests in both globalization and nationalism.

Through the political and legal system, the state-engineered language hierarchy became a “language ideology” taught through the public school system, and reinforced in the cultural and social sphere. By language ideology, I apply Irvine’s definition to mean “the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests” (1989:255). Gal and Woolard elaborate on the implication of language ideology as the cultural conceptions about the nature, form and purpose of language, and its usage in social interactions as an enactment of a collective order (1995:130). Under this analytical framework, I apply linguistic anthropologist Jillian Cavanaugh’s conceptualization of social aesthetics of language to examine three inter-related and mutually reinforcing ways, in which the Chinese state’s language ideology plays out in everyday social interactions.

According to Cavanaugh, “a social aesthetics of language is the interweaving of culturally shaped and emotionally felt dimensions of language use and the extra-linguistic factors that rank
people and their groups into hierarchies” (2009:11). This differentiation first identifies Putonghua as modern, sophisticated and formal, and the Shanghai dialect as backward, inadequate, and informal. Shanghairen’s shared belief in the importance of proper language choice—either Putonghua or Shanghai dialect, considering topic, occasion, and audience of the speech – is the first aspect of this social aesthetics of language. Second is the way in which the language hierarchy is reproduced, and individual’s linguistic capital, is accumulated in the school system. Since Putonghua is the sole language of instruction, Putonghua proficiency is both an indicator of educational achievement and a tool to achieve it. Third is the class-based association between the language spoken and the speaker’s socioeconomic status. In general, speaking Putonghua indicates higher educational level and social status.

To analyze the workings of language ideology in these three ways, I employ Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital, which means knowledge acquired through the school system and “inherited” from class-based upbringing (1986). Under the broad concept of cultural capital, Bourdieu defines “linguistic capital”, a form of embodied cultural capital that implies a mastery of language and interactional practices concerning language use (1990:114). In this study, I treat proficiency in Putonghua and the Shanghai dialect, as well as beliefs about their differentiated aesthetics and functions, as linguistic capital. According to Bourdieu, language proficiency and its proper use is converted to social status and upward mobility; in other words, language is converted from embodied cultural capital to social and economic capital. The conversion for the two languages do not necessarily take place on the same market, a market defined by the state, as Bourdieu stresses (1991). Rather, similar to what Woolard discovered in her study about Catalan speaking in Barcelona (1985), an alternative market co-exists in the parallel, for the effective conversion of the Shanghai dialect into symbolic, social and economic capital.
The full picture of the changing linguistic scene of Shanghai requires an understanding of the Shanghai dialect preservation movement. It is a social movement that mobilizes narratives of cultural heritage, particularly the Shanghai dialect’s roots in the ancient Wu language family, to fight against the state’s language law and language ideology. Grassroots dialect preservationists struggle to keep their language alive on Shanghai’s streets and in native Shanghairen households, using an ancient Chinese idiom as an expression of their powerlessness “a mantis raises its foreleg, trying to stop a coming wagon (tangbi dangche)”. They see a language crisis in Shanghai, as what was once the lingua franca in a cosmopolitan city is downgraded to the status of a provincial dialect. The potential loss of the Shanghai dialect is a cultural price the state is willing to pay to build Shanghai into China’s global city.

In the following, I will first examine state language policies and national language campaigns over the last sixty years, which have firmly established the dominance and prevalence of Putonghua, and successfully instilled a language hierarchy in the minds of native Shanghairen. Then applying and expanding Bourdieu’s notion of linguistic capital, I will detail how the cultural aesthetics of Putonghua and the Shanghai dialect are perceived differently, and how the linguistic capital associated with Putonghua is acquired and accumulated through the school system. Under these mechanisms, the Shanghai dialect has experienced rapid decline. Lastly, I will explain the strategies the dialect preservation activists deployed to try to reverse the endangerment.

A State Project

Upon founding the People’s Republic of China, the Chinese Communist Party deployed a wide range of political measures to establish an official national language, seeing linguistic uniformity as an essential part of unification and nation building. Borrowing Bourdieu’s insight
on the aim of the state, the definition and imposition of a national language in opposition to dialects is part of political struggles to claim political legitimacy (1992:47). Through language policies, the party intended to produce and reproduce “New Chinese Citizens” loyal to communist ideology and the leadership of the party. Under this logic, language policies over the last fifty years were designed to serve nationalism and the Communist party’s rule in the authoritarian state.

The communist regime is not the first political entity to define a national language with standardized pronunciation in China, but is the most successful in suppressing and endangering regional dialects to establish the hegemony of the official language. In 1728, Emperor Yong Zheng of the Qing Dynasty—who reigned from 1722 to 1735—declared Mandarin Chinese with Beijing pronunciation (Beijing guanhua) as the official language of his empire. This was the first time in Chinese history that the government enforced a standardized pronunciation. This set a precedent for regimes that followed. After the collapse of the feudal system in the early 20th century, seen as an integral component to the development of a modern nation-state, both the Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party) who ruled the country during the first half of the 20th century, and the Communist Party that has ruled since 1949, pursued the establishment of a national language soon after establishing their regimes.

The establishment of a modern national language was essential for the founding of a unified and modern Chinese nation, an idea that prompted the Kuomintang to define and promote a national language in the early years of the Republic. Party leaders believed that though a written classical language existed in China for over two thousand years, only a unified modern vernacular

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16 In the context of this study, I look at dialects of Han Chinese, the written systems of which are shared with Mandarin Chinese. Minority languages used by ethnic minorities such as Uighurs or Tibetans are beyond the scope of this study.
17 Interestingly, a Manchurian emperor implemented the official language for Han Chinese, based on Beijing pronunciation. His native language was a vastly different language, Manchurian, which belongs to the entirely different Tungusic linguistic family.
could serve as the linguistic foundation of a modern state (Ramsey, 1989:4). Representatives from northern Mandarin-speaking provinces and those from southern non-Mandarin-speaking provinces competed for national language status for their native dialect. From a Bourdieusian perspective, the imposition of a national language throughout the entire state, used at all official occasions reinforces the authority and prestige of the language (1992:45). Thus, the representatives’ heated debate about the definition of a national language in the period of state formation was a competition for the status and dominance of their own dialects.

The promotion of a national language with standardized pronunciation in the Republic era served the Kuomintang’s agenda for modernization and nationalism, but did not sacrifice regional dialects in exchange. When each province had only one vote, the geographically dominant Mandarin dialect, based on Beijing pronunciation, was selected over the three competing southern dialects (Cantonese, Fuzhounese, and Wu, which the Shanghai dialect is a variation of) as the national pronunciation (guoyin) (Ramsey, 1989:5). Guoyin was then promoted nation-wide through the school system starting in 1920, and adopted by radio broadcasting in 1932. Despite these official efforts, in Shanghai in the 1930s migrants from all over the country brought with them different regional pronunciations and vocabularies, creating a polyglot linguistic scene, instead of a population unified by singular national pronunciation. This linguistic scene affected the Shanghai dialect itself, which was enriched by adopting grammatical structure and vocabularies from various regional dialects such as Suzhou, Ningbo, and Hangzhou (Qian, 2007:19-24), which are the ancestral lands of most current native Shanghairen.

The Chinese Communist Party, which defeated Kuomintang in 1949, shared the modernization and nationalism agenda represented by national language policies. One of the

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18 Guoyin is still in use in Taiwan, where Kuomintang has ruled after the Communist Party took over the mainland since 1949.
practices the new ruling party decided to keep was the Republic era’s language policy that called for a unified national tongue. The Communist party inherited Guoyin as the pronunciation of the country’s new official language, Putonghua (which literally means “common language”). This is a particularly interesting policy choice for the new political rulers, since they were the same people who fought so bitterly for the equal status of Cantonese, Fuzhounese, and the Shanghai dialect during the Republic Era (Chen, 1999:121). While Ramsey sees those former pursuits and concerns of communist party members as either ignored or forgotten when they came into power (1989:14-5), I argue that it was actually consistent with the logic of nationalism. Political ideology, right or left, is irrelevant; it is a modern Chinese state speaking a unified language that matters to a leading party.

This vision for a linguistically unified China gave rise to both Guoyin in the Republic era and Putonghua in the communist regime. From her study of Catalan speaking in Spain, where Castilian is the national language, Woodlard argues that the equation of language and nation is not a natural fact but rather a historical, ideological construct (1998:16). This construct is usually articulated as a need for clear communication across a country; for example, the vernaculars in southern China such as the Shanghai dialect or Cantonese belong to different linguistic families than Guoyin or Putonghua, so for a monolingual Guoyin or Putonghua speaker, those southern tongues are unintelligible.

However, as Bourdieu points out, the purpose of the imposition of a national language is the political need to constantly remind and reinforce state authority and the ruling party’s dominance (1992:47). In contemporary China the advocacy of a single, standardized language reflects the cultural and political elites’ agenda of building up national unity on the one hand and
political controllability on the other (Zhou & Ross, 2004). Beyond political control, Putonghua also serves as a tool for the construction of a homogenous identity of Chinese-ness (Guo, 2004).

To achieve the unification and imposition of Putonghua, which according to Ramsey is an abstract, standardized language that not a single person in the country spoke as his native idiom (1989:9), the state carried out the nationalist agenda aggressively through legal, administrative, and propaganda mechanisms to establish the dominance of Putonghua across China.

Legal Structure

The nationwide dominance of Putonghua was a top-down state project established first and foremost through the legal system. Putonghua’s official language status is recognized and reinforced at four levels in the legal structure. At the top are national laws such as the fourth and current Constitution, and the Law of People’s Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language passed by the People’s Congress. These are followed by administrative regulations and policies at the second tier issued by the State Council. On the third level are provisions and documents issued by bureaus under the state council, such as the “Provisions on the Administration of Putonghua Proficiency Test” issued by the Ministry of Education. The lowest level consists of regional regulations. Together this legal infrastructure has ensured the dominance of Putonghua as the official language of China, guaranteed and reinforced at various levels and through various state agencies.

Shortly after the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949, meetings of top-level officials were organized to determine an official language. The first state policy concerning the national language was called the “Directive of the State Council on Promoting Putonghua” (tuiguang Putonghua zhishi), passed at the State Council’s 23rd National Emblem on January 28th, 1956. This
directive granted Putonghua the status of an official language, to be used as the common language for all Han Chinese. In terms of Putonghua’s relation with dialects, the most explicit formulation of the official position was published a few months before in People’s Daily, which is the state-owned newspaper representing opinions of the party, that “[p]romoting Putonghua does not mean intentionally annihilating local dialects, but to gradually limit their scope of use, which is in conformity with the objective rules of societal progress” (1955; quoted in Chen, 1999:58). The 1956 directive also instructed all schools, from first grade through university, to teach students in Putonghua. Through the nationwide public school system, the language and its underlying legitimacy and dominance were thus instilled in the minds of future generations.

The status of Putonghua was further strengthened in the fourth Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, passed on December 4th, 1982. Passed after the ten-year turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, and the adoption of an “Open Policy” in 1978, the fourth and current Constitution was the legal framework for China’s economic reform era. The constitutional provision related to Putonghua, Article 19, states, “The state promotes the nationwide use of Putonghua.”¹⁹ More than thirty years ago, Putonghua’s dominance was established at the highest level of China’s legal system, and ever since the state has been proactive in its promotion, as the cornerstone of political measures to ensure social stability and citizen’s loyalty to the state and the party.

Under the framework of the Constitution, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress passed the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language at the end of 2000.²⁰ It was a measure to aid both political control and
economic development. Shortly after the 1998 Asian Financial Crisis, this law coincided with the beginning of a new phase of China’s economic reform and participation in globalization. This decree effectively gave Putonghua the same significance as state sovereignty, national dignity, and unification. The law describes Putonghua as an essential means to enhance the social construction of the material and ideological infrastructure of the state (*wuzhi jingshen wenming jiangshe*).

It also makes explicit the breadth and width of the usage of Putonghua across the country. It mandates speaking Putonghua within all state organs, schools of all levels, mass media, and encourages its use in the service sector. 21 Exceptions are made, though either in vague terms, such as in Article 16.1, “local dialects may be used when state functionaries *really need to* use them in the performance of official duties,” and in Article 16.4 “where local dialects’ use *is really required* in publishing, teaching and research”; or subject dialect use to further bureaucratic process, as in Article 16.2: “local dialects may be used in broadcasting with the approval of the broadcasting and television administration under the State Council or of the broadcasting and television department at the provincial level”. From the top level of the legal structure, the linguistic space of regional dialects is sharply reduced and restricted; and the linguistic space of Putonghua is clearly defined and guaranteed.

**National Campaigns and Workplace Regulations**

More effective than merely passing laws is the continual reinforcement of the law. Otherwise, an artificial, standardized language shared automatically across a vast land could only exist on paper, or in the imagination. Bourdieu notes that a single “linguistic community” of an invented national language, is “endlessly reproduced by state institutions capable of imposing

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21 Read the full text of the law in Appendix I.
universal recognition of the dominant language” (1992:46). The Chinese state has two main strategies to reinforce Putonghua’s prominence through the national administrative system. One strategy is the annual nationwide Putonghua Promotion Week. The other, perhaps more important, is the required Putonghua Proficiency Tests for a plethora of occupations.

The Ministry of Education passed the motion creating “Putonghua Promotion Week” as a national annual event in 1998. Starting the following year, the third week of every September is designated as the promotion week, characterized by various promotional and propaganda activities held across the country. Notices guiding the annual promotion are jointly issued from nine central government bureaus including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Propaganda, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Personnel, Labor and Social Security, the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television, and the General Political Department of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army. Every year, the theme for the annual event changes, showing the new political message encoded in the dominance of the official language. 22 Competitions are held, centered on the chosen theme, including poetry recitations, spelling bees, choruses, posters or calligraphy. These competitions are organized by the public school system, cultural institutions, and various state institutions.

Over the 2013 promotion week, speaking Putonghua was integrated with the realization of the “China Dream”, which is an idea introduced by Xi Jinping, the current President of China, in November 2012. In his speech, he used the phrase to mean “the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”, but the exact implication of this political ideal remained vague, without clear parameters. Thus, the theme of the 2013 promotion week was described as “Using Putonghua to describe the ‘China Dream’, using standardized simplified Chinese to write the ‘China Dream’”. Other than these

22 See a full list of the propaganda slogans since 1998 in the Appendix II.
official definitions, a practical explanation of exactly what the “China Dream” means for an ordinary citizen’s life remains elusive. It has nevertheless been cited in political statements, official party speeches, and governmental directives, to indicate accordance with the party’s leadership.

By invoking the “China Dream” in the promotion week theme, the nine top-level ministries and bureaus that jointly issued the notice made it clear that Putonghua was the only linguistic means recognized and encouraged by the state to participate in the dream. This exclusiveness again reinforces the dominance of Putonghua. Also, this theme excludes those who use traditional Chinese characters, as in Taiwan, Hong Kong, or diaspora Chinese communities that were established before 1949, to write the “China Dream”. The theme is the embodiment of the binding of a nationalist vision with the official language, which simultaneously excludes other tongues and subjects not directly under the communist party’s rule. To linguists in the West, this association shows how, according to the state, multiple languages indicate multiple loyalties, and thus “a temperamental flaw, a lack of trustworthiness,… and shifting language as evidence of equally shiftable, hence dubious and shallow allegiances” (Irvine & Gal, 2000:65). In this regard, the central government made plain that language choice is not a personal linguistic or cultural choice, but an announcement of political affiliation and loyalty.

The theme for the 2014 Putonghua Promotion Week again centered on Xi’s political ideal, “China Dream”. The theme reads “Speak Putonghua well, he, you and I will realize our dream (shuo hao Putonghua, yuan meng ni wo ta).” I understand this theme to mean that not only does one need to speak Putonghua, but to speak it well, to make possible the realization of the ‘China Dream’. This theme combines wishful thinking of an imagined community, superficial solidarity, and a nationalist ideal, and translates that into a linguistic practice of self-governmentality. It asks each individual whether he wants to have a slice of the pie of China’s rising prosperity, and states
the political allegiance as expressed by the use of Putonghua as a prerequisite for participation. Though not the focus of this study, the gendered language in this theme deserves our attention here. In the theme, a male third person pronoun 他 (ta, meaning he) is used to represent everyone other than you and me. It is one more example of the resurgence of gender inequality in Mainland China in the last two decades (See for example works by Yinhe Li, 1997, 1998, and Leta Fincher, 2014).

During the other 358 days of the year when it is not officially Putonghua Promotion Week, reinforcement of the dominance of Putonghua is carried out as obligations assigned to various levels of the government and state functionaries under the party’s control. As Dengfeng Wang, an official from the Ministry of Education, stated in a work report in 2008, “Party and administrative offices serve as the “dragon-head” to lead, schools function as the foundation, news media act as models, and public service agencies perform as windows.” In this way, abstract language policy becomes operational guidelines for linguistic practices of public employees, from public service agents to schoolteachers, and reporters. The proper, professional conduct of speaking Putonghua is expected and required, as an essential part of Putonghua promotion.

In an interview, the Deputy General Manager of the Shanghai Grand Theatre explained to me how they, being a “Window Organization” (chuankou danwei, meaning representing the image of the city and facing the general public), would be constantly covertly inspected by the city’s Office of the Construction of Ideological Infrastructure Committee (jingshen wenming jianshe weiyuanhui bangongshi):

They would come to our box office, pretending to be clients and asking about performances, to see whether our staff speaks perfect Putonghua. Or sometimes they would just act like tourists asking our security guards for directions. Very sneaky, we always only find out about their visits in the later notice or report they send us. If spotting dialect speaking or untidiness of the venue, they would deduct points from our annual ranking to be a Model Organization (wenming danwei), threatening to take away the plaque.
Though during the economic reform era, previously state-owned and state-funded theatres and art troupes were restructured to take full responsibility for their financial standing, administratively they still belong to the Shanghai Municipal Propaganda Bureau. Taking away the Model Organization plaque would be a serious punishment and public humiliation for any organization, and affect the career trajectory of the organization’s leadership. This intricate relation between government and non-profit organizations indicates that the implementation of the language law is the responsibility of more than just the law enforcement sector, but stretches to various interconnected state and party agencies that painstakingly engage in daily surveillance.

For a state project to ultimately reach the individual level, to affect an ordinary Shanghairen’s everyday life, municipal and local agencies not only reinforce Putonghua speaking through organizational control, but also through individual surveillance of personal conduct. The guiding principle is to treat any effort to promote local dialects as a challenge to the dominance of Putonghua. In early 2013, a team of producers and editors at the Shanghai People’s Radio Station submitted a proposal for a citywide Shanghai dialect competition to the Shanghai Spoken and Written Language Committee under the Municipal Education Bureau. It was a grassroots effort intended to encourage Shanghai dialect speaking among school children. According to Ren Zhong, a member of that radio station team, the committee was interested in the proposal and showed verbal support, but required the committee’s name not to be mentioned in any promotion of the dialect competition. As a municipal governmental agency, it was important that they were not seen by other agencies or featured in media as a backer of a Shanghai dialect related activity. However, without written governmental approval, no promotional or recruitment material could be distributed in schools.

Ren Zhong attributed the failed attempt to organize the Shanghai dialect competition to the
dilemma faced by school principals and teachers:

Without a clear order from above, they dared not to do a thing. Plus, they are all required to carry out the administrative order to promote Putonghua. How could they participate in the promotion of the Shanghai dialect, when everywhere on campus there are small plaques and posters saying ‘Please Speak Putonghua’?

According to Dengfeng Wang’s statement, any governmental agency, such as the Municipal Language Committee, is supposed to lead the promotion of Putonghua, and schools are the primary organ for the creation of Putonghua speakers. Thus, the message on those small plaques or painted on walls and windows, “please speak Putonghua” (see Figure 3.1 for an example of the Putonghua promotion slogan painted on window panel in schools), not only reminds school principals and teachers of their duty, but also explicitly excludes Shanghai dialect speaking in any form on campus.

The other systematic strategy to ensure the promotion of Putonghua is through the Putonghua Proficiency Test. For occupations such as news reporter, police officer, performer, or schoolteacher, the state sets minimum scores as part of the required qualification. Xia, a native Shanghairen policeman in his mid-40s proudly informed me that he scored 92 out of 100 in the test, while the national standard for policeman was 87. Passing the test is only the beginning; daily

Figure 3.1. A window panel with “Please Speak Putonghua, Please Write Standardized Characters” painted on a classroom door on the campus of Fudan University. Photo Credit: Jinjin.
linguistic practice is required.

During fieldwork in Shanghai I came across interactions among various professions, for example bank clerks, hospital receptionists, or restaurant staff that centered on the issue of public use of language. Figure 3.2 is a photo of a “Please Speak Putonghua” plaque commonly seen at hospital lobbies, banks, and at public transit customer service counters. It faces outward to remind clients of the linguistic norm in public places, and its presence also ensures that the staff self-monitor their speech.

From my observations, it was only when a client responded in broken Putonghua with a strong Shanghai dialect accent, or completely in Shanghai dialect, that a bank clerk or receptionist would switch to Shanghai dialect to accommodate. Usually, those who do not speak Putonghua well are elderly native Shanghairen, who finished schooling before the Communist Party’s

Figure 3.2 A plastic plaque showing “Please Speak Putonghua, Please Write Standardized Characters” nailed to the pole at a hospital lobby. Photo Credit: Jinjin.
Putonghua project started in the 1950s. In other cases, as my bilingual native Shanghairen interviewees told me, for everyday conversation, they were likely to follow the language choice of the person who initiated the conversation. Complementing each other, the language component in those professions’ job descriptions and bilingual native Shanghairen’s linguistic tendency explain the prevalence of Putonghua speaking in public settings such as banks, hospitals, retail stores, or public transit stations.

The promotion of Putonghua is not an isolated project; instead, it is integrated into the legal and administrative system under the Chinese Communist Party’s leadership. It represents a nationalist vision of a unified, modern, prosperous, and “open” China, and took on momentum in the economic reform era. To influence the behavior of ordinary citizens, the nationalist project of linguistic unification brings together state institutions and associated organizations. Ultimately, through themes of the annual promotion week and language qualification for employment, the state makes explicit the political and socioeconomic significance of Putonghua proficiency. This translates Putonghua proficiency into a type of linguistic capital, or embodied cultural capital, which is convertible into economic gain and social status. By applying the Bourdieusian analysis of capital conversion, I will show next how Putonghua’s dominance creates a language hierarchy that devalues the Shanghai dialect, and facilitates a new social stratification in the economic reform era Shanghai.

*Linguistic Capital Conversion*

The state’s Putonghua promotion project encodes the official language as clear, modern and advanced, in contrast to vernacular tongues such as Shanghai dialect, which is deemed backward, inadequate and incompatible with the country’s progress. This association of languages
with different properties or values constructs a language ideology regarding Putonghua as formal and of a higher status, and condemning regional dialects such as the Shanghai dialect as informal and of a lower status. Ordinary Chinese citizens recognize in this state engineered language ideology a hierarchy, with Putonghua comfortably on top. Individuals making language choices complying with this ideology internalize this hierarchy, to which I apply Bourdieu’s notion of linguistic capital (1991), a type of embodied cultural capital convertible to social and economic capital (1986).

By linguistic capital I mean not only language proficiency, but also a firm belief among bilingual speakers in Shanghai of the aesthetic value of both Putonghua and Shanghai dialect. Similarly, Bourdieu argues that the tongue which is spoken in public is never a personal choice, rather it involves both the linguistic competence to speak correctly to achieve a communicative purpose, and the social competency to speak properly given the circumstances (1991). The properness is defined by the state’s language laws and Putonghua promotion project, and internalized and reproduced by individuals through their daily linguistic practice and interaction.

Language ideology works through language choices when different aesthetic values are assigned to languages. More than any other factor, the association of a language with either high or low culture and the formality of the setting determine the individual’s language choice, in adherence to the state’s language ideology. Linguistically, it is close to a diglossic situation, in which two languages are hierarchically ranked into a high language of state, power and high culture, and a low language of intimacy, solidarity, and vulgarity (Jaffe, 1999; Cavanaugh, 2009). This language hierarchy is seen in mass media on the large scale, and on a smaller scale, in bilingual Shanghairen’s linguistic practice of switching between Putonghua and the Shanghai dialect.
The school system, understood from a Bourdieusian perspective, as institutionalized cultural capital, plays a determining role in how the language hierarchy is reproduced. This plays out through both the teaching of Putonghua and teachers’ own language choices. Thus it is a venue where linguistic capital is acquired and accumulated. Lastly, I will show examples of conversions between linguistic capital into other kinds of capital on both the dominant, and the parallel alternative markets, the success of which contributes to the reproduction and reinforcement of the dominant language ideology.

Aesthetic Values of Languages

The association between Putonghua and high culture explains the scenario described at the beginning of this chapter. The art center staff’s rude response to my speaking Shanghai dialect at a high culture venue exemplified the dominant language ideology, their assigned role to police and promote proper linguistic practice, and their linguistic capital in terms of the understanding of the language hierarchy. The concert for that night was performed by the United States National Symphony Orchestra, one of a series of events to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of official diplomatic relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China. Messages from both the Chinese President at that time, Hu Jintao, and the US President Barack Obama were printed, wishing for a successful performance, and their pictures were featured in the playbill.

That high-profile Western classical music concert was not a rare demonstration of the dominant language ideology, and its power and influence on individual’s linguistic practices in Shanghai. Under the state’s language ideology, classy, beautiful, and formal are among the aesthetic values associated with Putonghua, while regional dialects such as the Shanghai dialect is
deemed vulgar, backward, and informal. Two clips from Shanghai TV Station’s Morning News broadcast in early November 2013 illustrated native Shanghairen’s linguistic capital, in terms of the “proper” linguistic conduct.

The first clip was about a seasonal Shanghai local delicacy, hairy crab (*da zha xie*). On the street outside of a wet market, a reporter interviewed two elderly men about seafood venders’ newly invented sales trick, by which the crabs were labeled and sold according to their package instead of unit price. For example if one wanted to buy hairy crab Type 1580, it meant a combination of eight crabs, four males weighing 200g each and four female weighing 150g each for a total price RMB 1,580 (approx. US $260 dollars). One of the elderly men replied to the Putonghua-speaking reporter in Shanghai dialect, “Our ordinary people have no idea about those dealer’s tricks. *Nong Song Ning!*” (Shanghai dialect slang meaning play tricks).

The reporter was required by language law to speak Putonghua, but the bilingual interviewees burst out in Shanghai dialect to complain about seafood price on the street. Regardless of the price of hairy crabs, the location and topic of the interview communicated the occasion to be informal to the interviewees. Therefore, they did not hesitate to respond in the dialect.

The other clip was an interview with an operagoer at the reopening of the Shanghai Grand Theater after its eight-month renovation. In front of the posters and costume display of Verdi’s *Attila*, which was the season-opening performance, a middle-aged Shanghairen man responded to the reporter in Putonghua, though with heavy Shanghai dialect accent. Opera tickets ranged from RMB 80 to 1,280 (approx. US $13 to $210 dollars), making it much cheaper than the gourmet crab. However, the venue and topic of the interview indicated the formality of the occasion. Thus, the proper language choice for the setting, as perceived by the audience member, was Putonghua, despite the fact that he was not able to speak it well.
Encountering a Putonghua-speaking TV reporter, both interviewees made a language choice according to the language hierarchy. Their responses exemplify the association of the official language with high culture and formal setting, and Shanghai dialect with everyday mundane activities, such as shopping seafood at a neighborhood wet market. This distinction is the result of decades of language policies granting Putonghua a superior status, while simultaneously relegating dialects as inferior. The decision of which language to speak in public is never just a personal choice, as explained above; rather it involves linguistic capital of both language proficiency and judgment of the occasion. The definition of properness is in the hand of the state, rather than the individual (Bourdieu, 1991:47). An individual’s enactment of linguistic capital reinforces the cultural aesthetics of languages, reproduces the language hierarchy, and strengthens the dominance of Putonghua.

The dissemination of aesthetic values of languages can be particularly effective and influential when native Shanghairen producers in the cultural industry believe in the hierarchy and integrate it in their work. Jin, a famous novelist whose recent bestseller, *Fan Hua (Flowers)*, won various national awards, was blunt about the vulgarity of the Shanghai dialect over our interview:

> It has nothing to do with social class, but essentially [with] the language itself. It is not the issue of topics either, such as domestic conflict, or trivial things, the indecency of the dialect is embedded in each and every sentence. You can find lots of vulgarity and coarseness in ordinary Shanghairen’s dialect-speaking.

A bilingual native Shanghairen, Jin had worked as an editor for the literary journal *Shanghai Literature* for decades before he wrote *Flowers*, which incorporates Shanghai dialect in depicting urban living over the last half century. To him, Shanghai dialect, the former *lingua franca* of the city, and a member of the ancient Wu linguistic family, is essentially an urban vernacular for daily life, with curse words and vulgar sayings, and incompatible with high culture. It echoes Dorian’s analysis of the contrast between official language and dialects, that official language is usually
regarded as “a rich, rationally organized and rationally organizing instrument; and dialects by contrast, are considered impoverished, crude and most likely inadequate” (1999:8). By using Shanghai dialect to vividly depict urban life among middle and working class Shanghairen, Jin provides an authentic voice of Shanghai, one that regards the dialect as crude and less valuable. The language ideology he holds, which is expressed in his novel and over our interview, does not take into consideration the socioeconomic status of dialect speakers, but justifies the state’s language ideology.

Rather than personal opinion, the next example is an observation of linguistic practice at a private setting contributed by an interviewee. It involves a native Shanghairen who was born in 1983, speaks Putonghua fluently, and works as a director at Shanghai Television. I interviewed his cousin, Ouyang, who told the story:

It was at the family gathering to celebrate his 30th birthday at a fancy restaurant. His parents, and senior members of the extended family were all present. But he said later that he couldn’t give the thank-you speech in Shanghai dialect. According to him, it’s like physiologically [psychologically as well] compulsive, that he could not make himself. To him, it is a formal speech, so he could not switch to the local tongue. He apologized to us for that language choice at the end of the speech.

Through the language choice, Ouyang’s cousin demonstrates the embodiment of his linguistic capital, which disciplines his linguistic interaction with family members. His choice of Putonghua for the perceived formal setting exemplifies the differentiated aesthetics and status assigned to the official language, in contrast to the Shanghai dialect. Usually, dialect speaking at a private, intimate setting, such as among family members or in a close-knit community, signifies trust and solidarity (Cavanaugh, 2009:6; Jaffe, 1999:28; Gal, 1987:637; Woolard, 1985), but Ouyang’s cousin was unable to use the dialect despite his acknowledgement of the kind of audience he was facing. The apology notwithstanding, the differentiated aesthetic values of the two languages in the core of his embodied linguistic capital explain his language choice.
We have seen how the aesthetic values of language shape the expected, proper language for public settings, and in return, individuals’ embodied linguistic capital reproduces aesthetic values of languages through their daily practices and interactions. Next, I will turn to the venue where children acquire linguistic capital, highlighting the role of the public school system, which instills the association between Putonghua proficiency and upward social mobility.

Acquisition and Accumulation in School

Putonghua has been the instructive language from kindergarten to college since it was mandated in the 1956 directive. In a comparatively less rigid linguistic environment before the passing of the language law in 2001, Chen observed that in mainland China, competence in Putonghua in addition to one’s local dialect was generally taken as an indicator, albeit not always a reliable one, of one’s educational level (1999:30). Against this backdrop, the state’s language project since the early 2000s has emphasized a connection between Putonghua proficiency and upward social mobility, which can be understood as a conversion between linguistic, social and economic capital. The broader sociohistorical context facilitating such conversions involves changes in job allocation during the economic reform era. Instead of criteria essential in the Maoist era such as hukou status or political affiliation, the job market has turned to a more merit-based system that rewards educational achievement. Details of this shift will be discussed in chapter five.

The connection between Putonghua proficiency and educational achievement created under the state’s language ideology is reproduced in the school system. The formation and accumulation of linguistic capital starts as early as kindergarten. Many Shanghairen parents of young children told me stories of how after just weeks or months of sending their children to school,
they had stopped, and even refused to speak Shanghai dialect at home, even though most of them were raised in the dialect by grandparents.

The school system in Shanghai produces linguistic capital through teaching Putonghua, which in those who also learned Shanghai dialect at home fosters a bilingual capacity. The knowledge of two languages is the prerequisite for recognition of the hierarchy and, consequently, their differentiated cultural aesthetics. Bourdieu rightfully acknowledges the role of school in the elaborating, legitimating, and imposing an official language (1991:32). Wu, a computer programmer in his early 30s who developed a free cellphone App to type in Shanghai dialect, explained to me how public schools legitimate and establish Putonghua’s higher status by degrading the dialect:

The idea that speaking Shanghai dialect is philistine and low-class is deeply rooted. We were taught since elementary school that Shanghai tongue is a dialect, is rustic, as well as the idea that Shanghai dialect is of a lower status, not proper for formal settings. This language hierarchy taught at school influences children’s perception of the two languages and their future linguistic practices. Putonghua’s exclusive properness for formal settings is instilled as part of the linguistic capital children acquire in school.

The aspiration to do better in school, and in turn for upward social mobility feeds the self-motivation to speak Putonghua, to increase one’s linguistic capital for later capital conversion. Yujie, a native Shanghairen MBA holder and marketing strategy manager for Siemens’ headquarters in Shanghai, told me that upon entering college she realized her tendency to speak Shanghai dialect negatively impacted her presentation skills in the eyes of her professors, which motivated her to practice Putonghua as much as she could both on campus and at home with her parents.
Besides imposing judgments on students’ linguistic practice, and adhering to the language requirement in the job description, teachers’ language choices in non-pedagogical settings further reproduce the language hierarchy. Those linguistic practices demonstrate the thoroughness of the embodiment of language ideology, often in unintended ways. Lu Yan, a private elementary school teacher provided me with a telling example:

"Usually we teachers consciously use Putonghua at work, because school is a formal setting. But interestingly at meetings with the principal, he would use Putonghua to explain pedagogic materials in a very formal tone. Then, he would switch to Shanghai dialect when scolding us based on some review or report. He differentiates, switches back and forth. We as well, if criticizing students’ work, we would switch to the dialect."

In Yan’s depiction, in a relatively formal setting, the principal did not consistently use Putonghua. Rather, he switched to Shanghai dialect to swear, a function believed to be improper for Putonghua. The official language connotes power and authority, and is viewed as unsuitable for certain ways of speaking, regardless of social context.

Earlier linguistic studies, in a European context, interpret code switching as an inherited component of a value-laden bilingual system. Woolard discovered that in Franco era Barcelona the switch between Catalan and the official language Castilian communicated the expectation and the rules for the differentiated uses of the two languages (1987:117). From her study on French and Corsican bilingual speakers, Jaffe argues that the symbolic meaning embedded in code-switching relies on two mutually exclusive or opposing systems of values associated with the two said languages, from which co-present meanings are recognized by the speaker (1999:28). The principal’s language switch does not indicate that there are more coarse words in Shanghai dialect, but instead, that a social function and cultural aesthetic has been assigned to its use. Given that Yan has noticed the occasion of the principal’s code switch, it is apparent that the differentiated functions of the two languages are effectively communicated and universally understood.
When Yan continued to describe a similar linguistic practice among teachers when criticizing students’ work, it was clear that the differentiated social functions of Putonghua and Shanghai dialect are part of the linguistic capital reproduced at school. Through teachers’ demonstration of their linguistic capital, students learn about how, where, and when to use each language; besides learning Putonghua pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar in Chinese class. This linguistic capital will accumulate over years, and ultimately be converted to social and economic capital. Successful conversion will then in return reproduce Putonghua’s higher status and dominance.

Conversion on Two Markets

Linguistic capital is an effective indicator of socioeconomic status, and also one of the tools to achieve it in contemporary Shanghai. Anthropologists studying the social dimension of linguistic practices have noted that the hierarchy of languages corresponds to the social status of their speakers. Bourdieu notes that besides considering the correctness in pronunciations and grammar, the expressive style of the language spoken, such as when, where, and how to speak correspond to the social hierarchy of the speakers (1991:54). Conversely, Dorian argues that the correlation goes both ways, by which she means that “[l]anguages have the standing of what their speakers have. If the people who speak a language have power and prestige, the language they speak will enjoy high prestige as well” (1999:3-4).

This two-way association is built into the state’s language ideology. In elaborating how the language ideology taught at school influences native Shanghairen’s language choice, Wu Wei, a software developer who single-handedly wrote a Shanghai dialect typing APP for smartphones, concluded to me from his observation that the imposed lower status of the Shanghai dialect resulted
in “those self-perceived to be modern and classy people’s refusal to speak it.” Cavanaugh’s conceptualization of the social aesthetics of language sheds light on this; she means the cultural and emotional dimensions of language use and extra-linguistic factors that rank people into hierarchies (2009:11). To put it simply, people are ranked by the language they speak. Such ranking explains the self-distancing from the Shanghai dialect in Wei’s observation.

Because Putonghua has been the language instructed in the school system since the 1950s, its proficiency is associated with a long period of formal schooling, and hence higher educational achievement. In Shanghai in the 1980s, Ramsey observed that some educated, sophisticated Shanghai families had begun to use Putonghua in their homes (1989:30). From my personal recollection of growing up in Shanghai in the 1980s, Putonghua proficiency was by then already a component of habitus, which indicated a child’s family background. Not surprisingly, children from those better-educated families came to speak Putonghua better than their working-class counterparts and thus were usually favored by teachers in schools. Considering how high achievement in education will later translate into higher socioeconomic status, it exemplifies the working of habitus that through linguistic capital, the embodied cultural capital, class structure is reproduced.

From our interview, I learned that in Dabei’s family, the linguistic component of her son’s habitus was actively monitored and created under her husband’s order. Dabei is a native female Shanghairen who married a non-native. Her husband migrated from Shannxi in northwestern China; he objects to speaking Shanghai dialect at home. According to Dabei:

He thinks Shanghai dialect is backwards, not compatible with the global city image of Shanghai. Besides, he picks on my mother, who is not highly educated and speaks only the dialect, saying her world is very limited, evidenced by her limited language skill. He doesn’t like her speaking Shanghai dialect to our son. So when he is around, my mother though with heavy accent and difficulty, would speak
Putonghua to the boy. It is her way to show to my husband that she understands his expectation and requirement for the child.

The linguistic capital Dabei’s husband possesses is comprised not only of knowledge of his native Shannxi dialect, but also Putonghua and English, but also the knowledge of the rankings of them. To him, his mother-in-law’s lower educational level (and thus, social status) is the proof of the lower status and limited application of the Shanghai dialect. In turn, the Shanghai dialect is judged in relation to the dominant language ideology and confirms speakers’ low status in society. As Woolard points out through her study on the social condition of Catalan and Castilian speakers, the dialect’s speakers of lower socioeconomic status “furnish convenient evidence that they are not equipped for more authoritative functions” (1985:744). Immersed in the dominant language ideology through her own school years, Dabei found it difficult to counter her husband’s view. After a while, like her mother, she stopped communicating with her son in Shanghai dialect when her husband was present. Through her husband, the state-imposed language ideology constructed a monolingual Putonghua environment in the private sphere. Though deprived of the opportunity to learn the Shanghai dialect, Dabei’s son grew up with the proper, and thus desirable linguistic capital, which would later be rewarded in the school system and on the job market.

As these examples suggest, I observed in Shanghai that in general, Putonghua competence was recognized as a tool for climbing the socioeconomic ladder. Instead of the Shanghai dialect, it is a bilingual or trilingual capacity—many professionals in Shanghai work for transnational corporations and use English on a daily basis—that distinguishes the middle-class Shanghairen from the lower class monolingual Shanghai dialect speakers. The latter are predominantly senior citizens of a lower educational level and working-class background. Despite the fact that their lack of Putonghua proficiency is due to the historical context of the implementation of Putonghua in school systems, which started after their graduation from middle or high schools, their lower social
status is due mostly to the economic restructuring of the reform era. Many native Shanghairen nevertheless see this correlation as proof of the Shanghai dialect’s worthlessness when converting linguistic to social and economic capital.

Qi, a native Shanghairen dialect preservationist told me about his aunt’s firm belief in this correspondence, and her resulting linguistic practice:

Not only when talking to her high-school age daughter, [does she use Putonghua]; even when describing her daughter’s classmates and school life, my youngest aunt would switch to Putonghua automatically even though she was talking to my dad and other siblings of hers, regardless of her daughter’s presence.

From the way Qi described his aunt, I could sense that she had high aspirations for her daughter and regarded her daughter’s status as higher than her own. Through a conscious language choice, she wanted to make a distinction between her Putonghua speaking daughter and her Shanghai dialect-speaking siblings of a lower socioeconomic status. Qi’s aunt’s language ideology, which associated higher socioeconomic status with Putonghua speaking, was supported by the fact, that her daughter, at the time of our interview, was a manager for a foreign company located in Pudong’s CBD area, and earned the highest salary of her generation among the relatives.

From Qi’s aunt and cousin’s story, we see how linguistic capital, in particular Putonghua proficiency, becomes a convenient signifier of social status. To a certain extent, we can understand it as an example of achieving the “China Dream”, which, according to themes of recent years’ Putonghua Promotion Week, requires Putonghua proficiency to realize. The “China Dream” turns out to be less an individual aspiration than a promise by the state, that political and cultural conformity will be rewarded with economic prosperity and social recognition.

From Qi’s aunt’s story, we have seen how the dominant language ideology has influenced native Shanghairen of lower socioeconomic status, who now inhabit and promote that ideology. Bourdieu sees petite bourgeoisie, or the lower middle-class, as the main contributors to linguistic
change, because of the disparity between their socioeconomic aspiration and their limited means to achieve it (1991:62). Many Shanghairen of Qi’s aunt’s generation experienced the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) during their school years, and thus acquired only a middle-school level education before being sent to the countryside to engage in farming. Only a decade or two after returning to Shanghai to take up manufacturing jobs in the late 1970s, they were laid off in the economic reforms in the 1990s. Since then economic restructuring has closed down their work units and focused instead on the tertiary economy, that required education and skills that they did not possess. They now belong to a lower middle-class or working-class stratum. It is an intermediate position between the bilingual, if not trilingual, highly educated professionals, and rural-origin migrant workers who speak Putonghua with various heavy inland accents, or other dialects. To climb the socioeconomic ladder, native Shanghairen choose not only to speak the standardized official language themselves, but also, as in Qi’s aunt’s case, they create a linguistic environment at home that encourages Putonghua speaking and eschews Shanghai dialect speaking.

However, this is not the full picture of linguistic capital conversion. Shanghai dialect, though excluded, and even despised, on the formal market of capital conversion that is created and regulated by the state, has its appeal and value in a Shanghai local market. This market includes those outside mainstream career trajectories. They are retired native Shanghairen who do not speak Putonghua well, and who treat Shanghai dialect proficiency as the mark of an insider in the local community. Among these Shanghairen, this linguistic capital converts into social and symbolic capital.

Another group participating in this alternative market for the conversion of linguistic capital are migrant workers in the retail and service sector whose patrons include a large group of native Shanghairen seniors. Working as barbers, street food vendors, seamstresses, or locksmiths,
these migrants are outside the state’s employment system. These workers’ linguistic fluidity and use of Shanghai dialect converts directly to better customer service, more business, hence, economic capital.

Jin, the award-winning novelist who believes in the lower cultural aesthetic of Shanghai dialect, pointed out to me where to find Shanghai dialect speakers:

If you go to public space in lower class neighborhoods, those playing chess in parks, or mahjong at community centers, all speak the Shanghai dialect. Each person there is a Shanghai dialect loudspeaker, 24/7. They are at the base in the socioeconomic pyramid, its [size] is much bigger than upper levels.

He compared the hierarchy of languages and the number of their speakers to a pyramid, with the lower status language, the Shanghai dialect, having more speakers than Putonghua. It could be true among the older generation of native ShanghaiÃ®ren, especially those of lower educational level, as well as migrant workers, as he observed:

And also at the bottom are migrants, who came to Shanghai to open small businesses in neighborhoods selling produce, cutting hair or mending shoes and umbrellas. They are barely educated, coming to seek luck in Shanghai, like a century ago. First thing they did was to learn the Shanghai dialect, so as to communicate with patrons, most likely elderly ShanghaiÃ®ren. Those migrants who refused to learn Shanghai dialect were the wealthy ones, occupying the upper level of the socioeconomic pyramid.

Jin’s keen observation of the language practices among the lower class contributed to his depiction of symbolic power embedded in interactions between Shanghai dialect speakers and Putonghua speakers, in his bestselling novel, Fan Hua (2013).

I have observed similar language practices in a migrant seamstress over my fieldwork. During that encounter, the seamstress demonstrated her Shanghai dialect proficiency in serving her elderly native ShanghaiÃ®ren patrons, and deployed the symbolic and social capital, into which her linguistic capital had been converted, avoiding discrimination she might experience as a non-Shanghai dialect speaker. She had a sewing machine set up outside of an apartment building under
a shabby tent in a lower middle class neighborhood in the Hongkou district in northeastern Shanghai. I approached her in Putonghua for a seam repair, because in my understanding, most service sector workers were non-natives, and thus Putonghua speakers. She treated me with bad manners, which at first I assumed was because the seam work cost only RMB 5, a very small job. However, despite equally small work, the senior female customer after me received kind words from her. Instead of age, the reason for this differentiated treatment was language. This customer did not make the effort to switch from Shanghai dialect to Putonghua when talking to the seamstress. The seamstress conversed in Shanghai dialect with the later customer, though with a strong accent. Her attitude toward me changed immediately after I switched to Shanghai dialect. It supported my hypothesis of the alternative language hierarchy that places the Shanghai dialect above Putonghua, as a mark of certain social status.

This field encounter resonates with Jin’s description, that among migrant workers such as the seamstress, the Shanghai dialect is an important component of their linguistic capital, which can be converted not only to economic capital through business opportunities, but also social and symbolic capital to discriminate against more recent migrants, who have yet to acquire the dialect competence to make a living and start climbing the socioeconomic ladder.

In summary, the conversion from linguistic capital to other capitals in Shanghai takes place in two markets. The dominant one is similar to what Bourdieu identifies in the French context, that proficiency in the official language is rewarded in the school system and on the labor market connected with it, and thus devalues regional dialects and accents, and reinforces the language hierarchy (1991:49). The alternative market for converting dialect proficiency to immediate social and economic capital, from my observation, is still alive in Shanghai, despite the state’s language
ideology. The reason is the presence of the older generation native Shanghairen who do not speak Putonghua well, and the small businesses catering to them.

In the next section, I will explore the dire linguistic landscape of the Shanghai dialect, especially the risk of language loss among the younger generation born in the 2000s onward. Against this background, I will examine the efforts of a group of Shanghai dialect preservationists, who resist state language policies and create an alternative language ideology. Dorian summarizes the fate of languages by the principal that “languages are seldom admired to death but are frequently despised to death (1999:3).” Changing the cultural aesthetics of the Shanghai dialect could be a way to save it from such a fate.

Rapid Endangerment

Narratives about language loss often seem to suggest that speakers across different generations suddenly abandon their mother tongue and completely adopt the imposed or aspired language in every aspect of their lives, but the reality is rarely if ever this simple (Grenoble & Whaley, 1998: xv). Rather than a sudden switch, the endangerment of Shanghai dialect is closely associated with the state-sponsored ascendancy of Putonghua and the rise in intermediary bilingualism among native Shanghairen.

The 2001 language law, which coincided with the economic reforms that reached Shanghai in the 1990s, is largely to blame for the recent endangerment of the Shanghai dialect. Before the 1990s Shanghai was primarily monolingual, with the primacy of the Shanghai dialect due to both the lack of enforcement of earlier language policies, and the planned economy allowing limited social and geographical mobility. Summarizing from earlier studies in various sociohistorical contexts, Grenoble and Whaley argue, “the relinquishing of a native tongue is tied in part to the belief that success in a non-native language is crucial to economic advantage” (1998:37). The shift
from a planned to a market economy opened up venues for individuals’ upward mobility. To achieve that increase in status in a changing Shanghai, native Shanghairen made the pragmatic decision to emphasize Putonghua speaking. A primary means was through the school system, which is imbued with the state’s language ideology.

The language situation quickly changed over the last two decades, with the result that currently the majority of Shanghai dialect speakers are middle-aged or older. Younger adults and children only have a limited or passive knowledge of the dialect. While elderly native Shanghairen who do not speak Putonghua well rely on the Shanghai dialect for their daily activities, the younger generations in Shanghai are predominantly bilingual, and Shanghai dialect proficiency positively correlates with age. That is to say, the younger a person is, the lower their Shanghai dialect proficiency is likely to be.

Previous studies on earlier cohorts’ language patterns complement my findings on native Shanghairen schoolchildren’s lack of knowledge of the Shanghai dialect. A study conducted in the late 1980s examined language patterns across three generations of native Shanghairen who were born and lived their entire lives in the city. Language patterns of cohort members born in the 1920s, 1950s, and 1980s demonstrate the shift from monolingual to bilingual, and from using the Shanghai dialect as the mother tongue to using Putonghua even when talking with oneself (Qian, 1988:46-7). Similarly, Jiang concludes that most native Shanghairen students are qualified as bilingual, in a 2005 survey study of more than eighty-six hundred native Shanghairen students ranging from kindergarten to their first year of college, all with native Shanghairen parents (2006:64-5). A more in-depth view of the younger generation’s bilingual capacity is provided by Jiao’s study of two hundred and forty-three native Shanghairen students conducted in 2007. 23 Jiao

23 The ‘native-ness’ in that study was defined as: the students themselves and at least two generations above needed to be Shanghairen, presumably with Shanghai household registration status.
found that more than 70 percent of native Shanghai students consider Putonghua the language they speak most fluently, in comparison to 28 percent for Shanghai dialect. Furthermore, Shanghai dialect competence is positively associated with students’ age: the younger the student, the less likely he or she is to consider Shanghai dialect the language they speak most fluently. In Jiao’s study, only 17 percent of junior high school first-years considered Shanghai dialect the language they speak most fluently, while the percentage was higher among high school first-years and college freshman at 32 percent and 34 percent respectively (2009:30-1).

Jiao did not explain the reason for the difference by which Shanghai dialect competence among junior high school first-years’ is roughly half that of high school first-years who are only three years older. The answer becomes clear when we consider the year the two groups of students entered elementary schools; 2001 and 1998 respectively. The first-year junior high school students in Jiao’s study certainly demonstrated the “achievement” of the 2001 language law, which mandates Putonghua be used as the sole instructive language in schools since that year. As I can recall from my own high school years in the late 1990s in Shanghai, other than Chinese language courses, most courses were taught in Shanghai dialect, including physics, chemistry, and mathematics, among others. Furthermore, the language environment became even less tolerant in the late 2000s, as reported by some of my interviewees. In interviews, I learned that elementary and middle-school students were picked on by peers and punished by teachers for speaking the dialect at school.

Observations from my fieldwork in the fall and winter of 2013 further prove the consistent decline of Shanghai dialect proficiency among younger generations. Almost uniformly, the conversations I overheard between grandparents and grandchildren on the streets of Shanghai were characterized by grandparents speaking Putonghua to their school-age grandchildren with a heavy
accent, and apparent difficulty. Instead of teaching grandchildren the Shanghai dialect, grandparents chose to accommodate the younger generation’s language preference. Weiyun, a native Shanghairen professional in her mid-30s, recounted an encounter between her father and her kindergarten-age daughter:

To both my daughters, all cartoon characters speak Putonghua, so Shanghai dialect is a very, very remote and unfamiliar language. One day my father was trying to read a story to them in Shanghai dialect, “Today, grandpa is going to read a story…” but my younger daughter interrupted him and protested in a fairly bad manner, “Speak to me in CHINESE!”

This anecdote speaks directly to Shanghai dialect endangerment, especially among younger generations: a native Shanghairen child regards the Shanghai dialect as a foreign language. In particular, if we consider the fact that the little girl is the third generation of a native Shanghairen family, and lives with grandparents whose Putonghua is fairly poor. According to Weiyun, her two elementary school age daughters have only a limited knowledge of the dialect; if she insists the usually chatty girls to converse in Shanghai dialect, their answers to her questions would mostly be “yes”, “no”, or “okay”.

Using the language assessment chart produced by UNESCO, the stage of Shanghai dialect can be categorized as “definitely endangered” (See highlighted section in Figure 3.3). My ethnographic data shows that the dialect is spoken mostly among today’s parental generation, or

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Endangerment</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Speaker Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>The language is used by all ages, from children up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely endangered</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severely endangered</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critically endangered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The language is used mostly by very few speakers, of great-grandparental generation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extinct</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>There exists no speaker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.3: UNESCO Assessment of Language Vitality and Endangerment (2003)
those born in the 70s and early 80s. If we examine the language patterns across generations, between those born in the 2010s, to parents born in the late 1980s, and to grandparents born in the 1950s-60s, it seems accurate to say that Shanghai dialect is in a “severely endangered” stage (Grade 2 in Figure 3.3), meaning the language is used mostly by the grandparent generation and older.

The best illustration of the generational difference in Shanghai dialect proficiency is Yujie’s story comparing herself with her son:

All my school years until college, I expressed my opinions in Shanghai dialect, which to me was the most natural, convenient and efficient way. Then to adjust to the [linguistic] environment…and now the language in the work place [is Putonghua as well]. As for my son (four years old at that time), the linguistic environment he grew up in was Putonghua. So when he learned to speak, he spoke Putonghua. Now even when I want him to speak Shanghai dialect…there was once I asked him in Shanghai dialect to bring me a little bucket. He stood still, translated the request into Putonghua and said it aloud to himself before getting it done. He can totally understand the Shanghai dialect, but he doesn’t speak it. Probably to him, the most natural and convenient way to express himself is Putonghua.

If we remember from above, Yujie, because of pressures to improve her presentation skills and other academic performances in college, had strong motivation to speak Putonghua well. Between her son and herself, over the course of merely one generation, the most “natural” and adequate way to express oneself shifts from the Shanghai dialect to Putonghua.

Her son’s adoption of Putonghua as mother tongue is not a rare case. A private elementary school music teacher told me that at her school, native Shanghairen children born in the 2000s are barely able to speak the dialect. Her opinion echoes that of the principal of Haibei Kindergarten, which is located in an upper-middle class neighborhood in southwestern Shanghai. The principal told me that, over the last several years, fewer and fewer Shanghairen children have been able to speak Shanghai dialect, and one rarely heard it in classrooms or on the playground, in particular from the cohorts born in the 2010s.
The generational difference indicates the power of societal influences and the impact of the education system. In her study on the decline of native languages among American Indians, Mithun argues that the replacement of the mother tongue with the dominant language of the larger society takes place when “the strength of their own cultures and the intellectual value of bilingualism were little understood or appreciated” (1999:182). Yingli, a native Shanghairen in her early 40s, described to me her eleven-year-old daughter’s practical decision to speak Putonghua, which shows how bilingual ability is un-appreciated.

In Yingli’s daughter’s classroom, there are five non-native students out of a total of forty, but many of the native Shanghairen children do not speak Shanghai dialect, regardless of their origin. In Yingli’s daughter’s mind, it was a waste of time to initiate a conversation in Shanghai dialect. Often, she needed to repeat everything in Putonghua after realizing the other person did not understand the dialect. Her bilingualism served as an inconvenience more than a benefit: in her experience, it is apparent that the adoption of the Shanghai dialect in everyday life requires more effort than using Putonghua exclusively. It explains why school children like her refuse to speak the dialect despite having grown up in a domestic environment where Shanghai dialect was spoken. The linguistic space in Shanghai schools reproduces native Shanghairen children’s preference for Putonghua.

Furthermore, whenever talking to school age children, native Shanghairen would almost instinctively switch to Putonghua. Consider the following experience of a retired college professor, Wang Jian, as one example:

The linguistic environment is that even at home, parents speak Putonghua to children. For example, in the elevator of my building, a parent would say hello to me in the Shanghai dialect. The next second, he would switch to Putonghua to scold the kid: “Stand still!” Automatically, just like that!

This audience-specific language choice of Prof. Wang’s neighbor demonstrates the acceptance of
generational linguistic differences, and how bilingual speakers act accordingly to accommodate. Thus parents and the school system work in accordance with each other to create an exclusive Putonghua speaking environment for native Shanghairen children, which makes it apparent that dialect speaking is never supposed to direct at them, and is the practice of older generations. In this sense, the linguistic space of the Shanghai dialect does not belong to or welcome native Shanghairen children. This exclusiveness accelerates the dialect’s endangerment.

In summary, the decline of Shanghai dialect competency moves linearly across generations. It is most telling that when we examine the cohorts entering the school system after the language law of 2001, those born in the 1990s are still able to speak some Shanghai dialect, but need to switch to Putonghua from time to time due to the lack of Shanghai dialect vocabulary. Those born in the 2000s in general have a passive understanding of Shanghai dialect and prefer not to speak it. The most profound decline can be seen in the group born in the 2010s, who have little to no knowledge of the Shanghai dialect, and are highly unlikely to acquire any in the school system.

Through state policies and continuous governmental efforts to promote Putonghua, the dominance of the official language has, over the years, limited and even eliminated Shanghai dialect speaking in certain social spheres. This has led to the endangerment of the Shanghai dialect. Putonghua’s ascendancy over Shanghai dialect comes not only from administrative regulations and censorship, but also from the dominant language ideology communicated through the school system and labor market. As I have shown, native Shanghairen came to believe that speaking Putonghua well would contribute to their and their children’s future. Against this background of almost complete dominance of Putonghua in ‘proper’ social circles, and the continued marginalization of the Shanghai dialect in the city, a kind of resistance has emerged, in the form of a grassroots preservation movement.
The Dialect Preservation Movement

In an authoritarian state, especially in a city representing the country’s economic achievement and social stability, public protests or dissemination of dialect promotion materials through state-controlled mass media are highly unlikely. A 2012 study examining the language conflict between Cantonese and Putonghua in Guangzhou in southern China makes it plain the uneven power relations between the state-backed Putonghua hegemony and a vernacular society advocating for place-specific cultural identity (Qian et. al, 2012:908). Taking a lesson from the failed protests in Guangzhou, which, through social media and other limited channels attempted to reach policy makers, the Shanghai dialect preservationists have devised strategies to avoid direct confrontation with the state. They have developed tactics to criticize language policies and tried to create an alternative language ideology by altering the cultural aesthetic of the Shanghai dialect.

Role of the State

According to the state’s language ideology, Putonghua is the single language that represents “Chinese-ness”, loyalty to the state, and loyalty to the Communist Party. The long-term goal of Putonghua promotion is to unite the population around a homogeneous national identity, in place of diverse local ones. Among the younger generation of native Shanghairen, there has been a sharp decline in Shanghai dialect proficiency to the degree that younger children treat it as a non-Chinese language, i.e. Weiyun’s daughter. In this situation, performing artists represented by the Vice Chief Officer of a vernacular theatre group initiated proposals to the municipal government for dialect preservation. Behind their rhetoric of the dialect’s cultural heritage is a response to the market economy, under which the government has sharply reduced financial support for performing arts institutions. For the troupe to survive with little funding from the state,
an audience with Shanghai dialect proficiency is needed. With the dialect incomprehensible among native Shanghairen children, not only the troupe’s future, but also the fate of the art form itself is in jeopardy.

Instead of measures unlikely to work in a Chinese context, such as publicly denouncing the Putonghua hegemony, or advocating for a renewal of the dialect’s status as the city’s mother tongue as a human rights issue, Qian Chen, the Vice Chief Officer of the Huaijixi (Shanghai vernacular theater) Troupe, evoked Maoist ethics in his proposals sent to municipal policy makers. Being a famous Huajixi performer, Qian is also a member of the Shanghai Municipal Political Consultative Committee—a committee consisting of non-party members to consult on Chinese Communist Party’s policies. In the past ten years, he has put forward many proposals for providing bilingual services at government agencies and hospitals, and allowing children to speak the dialect at schools.

During our interview, I asked whether his proposals were in conflict with the Constitution recognizing Putonghua as the only official language, as well as with the Spoken and Written Language Law passed in 2001, which mandates Putonghua speaking for government employees and teachers. In response, he mobilized the Maoist ethical doctrine "Serving the People" to make his point, that those professions should not hold themselves above the people by insisting on the official language; instead, they should speak the language that the people speak, Shanghai dialect in this case, in order to better serve the people. Tactically, Qian’s rhetoric picks up the weapon of the weak, using the Communist Party’s own doctrine to challenge state laws. In his proposals, he reminded the Communist Party member officers of their promises to serve the people, rather than dictate to the people. At least on paper, they are supposed to be of the people, and for the people.
Targeting the accountability of governmental officials has proven to be of some use. In January 2014, a few months after my interview with Qian, his proposal for Shanghai dialect use in kindergartens was approved. According to one of the Communist Party’s online platforms, people.com.cn, the Shanghai Dialect Experience Education (Shanghaihua tiyan jiaoyu) planned a pilot study with twenty kindergartens across Shanghai later that year. Instead of forbidding the dialect altogether, the study was set up to encourage children to speak the dialect with each other out of class. It was the first step toward carving out a small space in the school system for the Shanghai dialect; though it is still far from a bilingual system. Nor is the study in any way capable of challenging Putonghua’s role as the only language of instruction.

Censored Voices

Without a formal channel to reach policy makers, other preservationists voiced their critiques of the 2001 language law on social media. Their posts on Weibo, the Chinese twitter, were often censored and taken down within hours of their posting. On the surface, their critiques were about language hegemony, but they had gone beyond the “safe” zone of cultural heritage, to challenge the legal system and point out the lack of democracy embedded in the passing and execution of the law. These preservationists’ frustration about the language law and the dialect’s risk of loss was expressed via a wide spectrum of critiques, ranging from an analysis of the state’s legal system, to China’s adoption of market economy.

To ensure their anonymity, I will not reveal the identity of the preservationists quoted below. Over the course of our interview, one middle-aged male native Shanghairen stressed the shaky ground of the legal enforcement of Putonghua:

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I question whether there had been sufficient public debate before the [2001 language] law was passed. I question whether the legislative procedure is legitimate. First and foremost, whether writing the clause about Putonghua into the Constitution had gone through sufficient discussion? In the West, amending the Constitution requires more than a pass at the Congress. Many issues require referendum. There is nothing like referendum in China!

Both the Constitution and the 2001 language law were passed through the proper Chinese legal and political process. What he complained about was essentially the authoritarian state, in which public opinion was not sought in the legislative branch of the government. In his opinion, policies and laws cementing Putonghua’s hegemony were indicators of an oppressive and undemocratic state.

Another line of critiques of the language law targets the administrative level, and similar to Qian Chen, uses the party’s own rhetoric for the critique. This male preservationist argued that the strict regulations on language were incompatible with the logic of the economic reform era:

When the government deploys administrative measures to promote Putonghua, how do they evaluate the effectiveness? Whether they get the money’s worth in results? Also, how do they know whether and how much the promotion of Putonghua affects other languages? The government knows nothing! No way to measure effects is a typical socialist way of doing things. The state is so used to planning everything, everything from the economy to the population size, to everything concerning an individual’s life, including language. It used to be like, ‘ordinary people don’t need to worry about anything – because the state will take care of everything.’ But, if the market economy has replaced the planned economy, then why has it not loosened the language [planning]?

He highlighted the lack of accountability in government measures in promoting Putonghua, in terms of the side effect of dialect endangerment. To him, the effectiveness of Putonghua promotion was not evaluated, along with those of other top-down measures to control individuals’ lives. Given the current endangerment of the Shanghai dialect, the success of Putonghua promotion is apparent. His juxtaposition of the two phases of the Chinese Communist Party’s rule since 1949 points out the reforms brought about better quality of life largely in the economic sphere for the
majority of the Chinese population. The censorship and control in the political and cultural sphere have not experienced a similar improvement.

Other preservationists share a kind of paranoid and powerlessness, as a Chinese language Ph.D. student active on social media explained to me:

The purpose of the language law is to destroy dialects! Everything is there to prepare for the annihilation of dialects. The essence of the Communist Party’s leadership is to control. In the central government’s mind, it would be much easier to control the people after the obliteration of all dialects. Otherwise, people with their own tongues will riot against the government.

This student’s understanding of the language law hinges on government control, rather than on population unification. To him, a unified language spoken across the country is a tool for effective population control. In his view an authoritarian state endorses an official language to unite the people under the state’s authority first, and any talk of a shared culture is secondary. His horror about language loss might appear exaggerated, but earlier studies conducted in the Soviet Union show such fears are not unfounded. The rapid loss of non-official languages such as Evenki, the largest of the Tungstic languages, was the direct result of policies implemented by Soviet language planners that created macro-level factors favoring acquisition of Russian at the expense of native tongues (Grenoble & Whaley, 1998:48-9).

Emphasizing the cultural value of the Shanghai dialect became the primary weapon of the preservation movement, to counter the state’s language ideology, which painted the dialect as backward and vulgar. As Dorian argues about language retention, for a small group to fight against the dominant language, a great deal of social and psychological self-confidence in the worth of the language is needed (1999:20). The repertoire of literature and theatre of the ancient Wu linguistic family, which the Shanghai dialect belongs to, provides rich sources for the re-establishment and recognition of the cultural worth of the dialect.
Cultural Worth

To alter the association of Shanghai dialect with lower educational level and lifestyle of the urban poor, preservationists point to the use of Wu languages in China’s traditional high culture, for example, poetry of the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907), or Peking Opera. Qian Chen, of the Shanghai Huajixi Troupe, explained to me the ancient pronunciations well preserved in the Shanghai dialect, but lost in Putonghua:

I have done my research about long vowel sound words (zhisheng zi) in Tang poetry, for example, Wang Zhihuan’s ‘Ascending Guanque Tower (deng guanque lou)’. The ‘bai’, ‘ri’ in the first line, ‘bai ri yi shan jin (sun sets by the mountain ridge),’ and ‘ru’ in the second line, ‘huang he ru hai liu (the Yellow River flows into the ocean),’ are supposed to be prolonged. Try to read it in the dialect…the up and down rhythms are superior! Shanghai dialect has prolonged sounding words, but Putonghua does not. Or our national treasure, the Peking opera, in the script of ‘Four Scholars’ there is a line ‘bai shang le Xinyang zhou (going up to the Xinyang county)’. In it, ‘xin’ has a sharp sound (jianyin). Where could you find jianyin in Putonghua? None! The differentiation between sharp sound (jianyin) and its opposite, rounding sound (tuanyin) in Peking operas is identical to those in the Shanghai dialect.

Qian recited the poetry and sang the opera line in both Putonghua and the Shanghai dialect for me to contrast the rhyme and flow, presenting the Shanghai dialect versions as more aesthetically pleasing as well as more authentic. His performance communicated a sense of pride in the cultural value of the Shanghai dialect. The worth of the language in this case is not articulated by its association with upward mobility, but symbolic capital and cultural aesthetic rooted in what he calls the “national treasure” of China.

Similar to Qian Chen’s arguments, in our interview, Miao, a Ph.D. student in Chinese Language, recited to me a few lines from Shi Jing (The Book of Odes) in Cantonese. The Book of Odes is another classical text; a collection of three hundred and five works dating from the 11th and 7th century BC. To him, the state’s language ideology that associates classical literature exclusively with Putonghua is historically and linguistically incorrect. Classical literary works are
not only recited in dialects, but were also most likely composed in dialects of the ancient Wu or Canton linguistic family. Therefore, dialects are historically and linguistically closer to the great works of Chinese literature than the newly invented official language.

This argument has a solid linguistic backing. Some phonetic features of Medieval Chinese (AD 25-907) are preserved in southern dialects such as variations of Wu or Cantonese, but are no longer present in the Beijing dialect of the twentieth century, on which Putonghua bases its pronunciation (Chen, 1999:18). In the arguments of preservationists, dialects provide a more authentic means to recite the classical literature of China, and further, that these endangered dialects possess their own aesthetic value, on par with China’s great works of literature. Grenoble and Whaley argue that a subtle but pervasive predictor of the continued use of a language is the prestige attached to it, for example, through the association with a rich literary tradition (1998: ix). Through building this association between the Shanghai dialect and classical Chinese literature, preservationists are building up the aesthetic status and symbolic capital of the dialect, to refute its lower status in the language hierarchy imposed by the state.

Conclusion

The generational differences in linguistic capital are the result of the factors discussed in this chapter: coercive state language policies, administrative measures to promote and reinforce the dominant language ideology, and the overwhelming influence of Putonghua’s status as the language of socioeconomic success in China. The market for converting linguistic capital into social and economic capital created and controlled by the state instills and reproduces the dominance of Putonghua. Devalued on the formal market, the Shanghai dialect faces a deteriorating future, with increasing threat of loss. The elderly Shanghairen who retain the dialect,
and the businesses catering to them, appear to be the last holdout. This might sustain the Shanghai dialect for just another few decades, at most, if the trend of younger generations’ lack of education in the dialect continues. To prevent this language loss from happening, a group of Shanghai dialect preservationists are devoted to producing an alternative language ideology, which stresses the cultural value of the dialect. We have yet to see how much it might influence authorities and native Shanghai parents.

The unique case of the endangerment of the Shanghai dialect is established also on its urban nature. What would happen if speakers of an endangered language were to move away from each other? Urban redevelopment and expansion over the last twenty years has displaced millions of native Shanghai residents from the city center to the periphery, where new residential communities were located in formerly rural areas. In the next chapter, I will examine how displacement and relocation reshaped the linguistic environment in Shanghai.
Chapter 4: Geographical Displacement and Language Loss

Two factors contributed to the endangerment of the Shanghai dialect: the language ideology of the Chinese state, discriminatory against regional dialects, and the tangible rewards of upward mobility associated with speaking Putonghua Mandarin. However, they were not sufficient to entirely dismantle the Shanghai dialect speech community. The language loss was accelerated by geographical displacement at the urban center.

Even before the 2001 language law, urban redevelopment displaced millions of native Shanghairen from their overcrowded inner-city neighborhoods. Traditional shikumen alleyway houses, once constituting 85 percent of the residential housing in the urban center, have been replaced by glass-façade office towers, high-rise condo buildings and elevated expressways since the early 1990s. With the traditional physical landscape disappearing, the close-knit community and vibrant linguistic environment once maintained in shikumen neighborhoods also disappeared.

The displacement and relocation of more than one million native Shanghairen households in the economic reform era shifted the sociospatial stratification of the city by sorting out residents according to their socioeconomic status. Over the last two decades, the state-controlled housing allocation system, that formerly redistributed heavily-subsidized rental housing according to criteria such as household registration status, career seniority or party affiliation, has been replaced by a real estate market economy. As a result, linguistically homogeneous but socioeconomically diverse neighborhoods have turned into linguistically mixed but socioeconomically homogeneous ones.

The involuntary relocation amidst massive urban redevelopment and expansion in the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s has utterly changed the linguistic landscape of the city. Gumperz’s (2001:43) relational conceptualization of speech community — “any human aggregate
characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language use” — helps us define the two speech communities distinguishable in current Shanghai: non-natives who predominantly communicate in Putonghua Mandarin; and Shanghai dialect and Putonghua bilingual natives who communicate mainly in Shanghai dialect. The geographical displacement and relocation of native Shanghairen in the last two decades disrupted the “regular and frequent interaction[s]” of a speech community and threatened its survival.

Furthermore, the sweeping physical changes of the city wiped out the unique character of Shanghai, as it had been embodied in the urban built environment. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this unique character is a type of symbolic capital recognized by native Shanghairen as ambiance and authenticity rooted in the city’s semi-colonial history. Zukin (2010: xi) states that a city’s distinctive character would nurture a constant dialogue and negotiation between the old and the new, and in the process, produce and reproduce its authenticity. Shanghai, in the state-led construction of a global city, has diverted from this path, when dialogue was replaced by large-scale demolition. The removal of distinctive residential neighborhoods in the urban center made way for a distanced and cold global modernity, raising Shanghai’s status in comparison with the global cities of the West, but losing its former symbolic capital.

Urban studies shed light on the meaning of the distinctive character of places. Firey (1945:144) looks at the symbolic quality and sentiments articulated in Beacon Hill in Boston. In her study of New York City, Zukin (1995:264) emphasizes the “divergent and multilayered cultures of cities,” which include dimensions of ethnicity, lifestyle and image. Molotch et al. (2000:807), in their comparative study of two California cities, stress the distinctive local ambiance,
and David Harvey (2001:405) highlights the fact that claims to uniqueness and authenticity rest upon historical narratives, collective memories and cultural practices.

The distinctive character (or aggregated symbolic capital) of Shanghai draws heavily from the historical image of an East-meets-West metropolis, as documented in newspaper articles, novels, photos, and movies showing people from all over the world and every walk of life consuming, mingling, and struggling for a better life in Shanghai. Dialogue and negotiation with outside influences were vibrant in early 20th century Shanghai, as evidenced in architectural features, fashion, cuisine, ideological trends and the development of the Shanghai dialect. During this period, Shanghai’s unique character took shape. Before the Chinese Communist Party founded the People’s Republic in 1949, Shanghai was a cosmopolitan space like no other. Under Mao, dialogues and interactions with the outside world were shut down, so the rich and vibrant character was frozen in time, preserved and rearticulated as tradition in the collective memories of native Shanghairen.

In the economic reform era, policymakers aimed to re-image Shanghai as a global city. The first step was to “adopt a ‘global city look’ by constructing state-of-art infrastructure and flagship architectural projects” such as bridges, airports and skyscrapers (Ren, 2011:13). Instead of the revival of the city’s cosmopolitan tradition, native Shanghairen saw “Manhattanization,” the new urban form of capitalist globalization, signifying an inauthentic and undistinctive urban space, where the traits of the locale and the vernacular are replaced with uniform glass-façade high-rises (Zukin, 2010:2). After twenty years of massive urban redevelopments of industrial, commercial and residential spaces, many native Shanghairen complain that the living experience of an urban space with distinctive character is dying — if not already dead — in Shanghai.
In the eyes of native Shanghairen, the Oriental TV Tower, the Shanghai World Financial Center (dubbed “the World’s Largest Bottle Opener” on TripAdvisor website\(^\text{25}\)), and the China Pavilion at Shanghai Expo 2010 are symbolic of a “world-class city,” which has little to do with their sense of home and belonging. In Zukin’s words, they are images for the nation, and the world to consume (1995:8). The more those urban spectacles are staged for the world, the less they are relevant to the native Shanghairen’s sense of belonging. The disappearance of shikumen and lilong housing neighborhoods also removed the material basis for the Shanghai dialect speech community. Spatially and culturally, native Shanghairen feel alienated and lost facing the “Globalizing Shanghai (Chen, 2009).”

*Involuntary Mobility*

Starting in the 1990s, urban redevelopments in Shanghai hollowed out the urban center and led to the fraying of the social fabric. Redevelopment projects ranged from rebuilding or renewing dilapidated and overcrowded residential areas to upgrading urban infrastructure such as elevated expressways, bridges and subways. In this process of dramatic urban landscape change, more than 1.1 million households were displaced between 1995 and 2013 (Shanghai Statistical Yearbook, 2011, 2014). Urban core residents with a meager budget were displaced to the periphery of the city; this displacement was accomplished by the rezoning of previously rural areas outside of Shanghai proper.

Urban redevelopments were accompanied by changes to the leading industry in Shanghai, mainly from manufacture to tertiary. Factories, which had once served as the main source of

district and municipal revenue, were moved to the outer suburbs. Without the factories, land leasing fees became the primary sources of financing for local services in many urban districts (Zhou & Logan, 2008:150). As David Harvey (2001:405) points out, certain urban locales, leveraging their uniqueness and particularity from historically constituted cultural artifacts and environmental characteristics, can generate monopoly rent. Not surprisingly, the private-public partnership between real estate developers, districts and municipal government favored neighborhoods in the upper-corner of central Shanghai, such as Huangpu, Luwan and Jing’an Districts. These upper-corner neighborhoods represent the quintessential cosmopolitan Old Shanghai in its Golden Age in the 1930s. Here, colonial powers and Chinese national political, economic and cultural elites took residence and engaged in conspicuous consumption. Thus, land values of those neighborhoods became the highest in the city.

To understand the land-leasing and profit-generating process in contemporary urban China, Ren borrows Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic capital, in particular the notion of misrecognized value, to stress that the financial value of the buildings is inflated by the design roles played by famous foreign architects, not by bidding for the land. She suggests that when price is inflated by the competition between multiple bidders, “the land takes on a symbolic value that is disproportionate to its technical and economic qualities, and therefore the symbolic capital of the land is a kind of misrecognition, and arbitrary and inflated assessment of value” (2011:170).

Contrary to her view, I see the bidding practice as a value-generating process, in which the bidders are betting on the perceived return value of the piece of land. When arguing for the misrecognition of the symbolic capital of the land, Ren does not take into consideration the scarcity of the land resource and the location of specific plots of land in the city’s historic geography. Based on the recognition of the scarcity of inner-city land, I argue that an ideal location for redevelopment
takes its symbolic capital from the appropriated urban history, especially whether it is in the “authentic” Puxi (west bank of the Huangpu River) part of Shanghai, and whether it is within the borders of former Western settlements. Bourdieu’s theorization of symbolic capital stresses the societal boundary of its effectiveness or recognition (1998:103-4). That is to say, the prestige, fame and privilege associated with residence in the upper-corner is mostly recognized by native Shanghairen, who are socialized to recognize, believe in and reproduce the century-old upper-corner/lower-corner sociospatial distinction.

In urban redevelopment, the upper-corner/lower-corner distinction is reproduced in a spiral fashion when economic capital in the form of property value and symbolic capital in the form of prestige and privilege feed into each other’s rise. Land in upper-corner Puxi such as Jing’an, Luwan and Huangpu districts (with their symbolic capital inherited from the colonial era) can garner higher bids from real estate developers and be charged higher leasing fees by the government. As a result, social services provided in those districts, including hospitals, public schools and sanitation, are of higher quality than those of previously lower-corner districts such as Hongkou and Yangpu. As noted by Orum et al. (2009:384), in the Xin Hua neighborhood of the upper-corner, the community center provides local residents “a well-stocked library, as well as a building with individual rooms set aside for regular activities such as language lessons, singing and even the use of high-end computers.” Those neighborhood-based provisions re-activate and reinforce the privilege of living in the urban core.

Adding insult to the injury, much of the urban central land in Puxi once occupied by overcrowded residential housing was redeveloped into office towers and shopping centers, further limiting the housing stock in the upper-corner. As a result, the prices for apartments in those
neighborhoods are pushed ever higher, and the sociospatial stratification represented by an individual’s housing location is ever more rigid.

With redevelopment projects taking place in the urban core, previous residents were usually offered two options, either receiving monetary compensation or ready-for-move-in apartment units. However, neither of these options spared them the loss of departing the urban core, and their new housing condition in large part depended on their own socioeconomic status. Based on sub-district level 1990 and 2000 census data, He and Wu (2007:187) conclude that the urban core has experienced “decreasing population density and an increasing concentration of population with higher socioeconomic status and education level.” The monetary compensation provided by developers fell short of the actual market prices for apartments in the same neighborhoods. Moreover, those ready-for-move-in apartments were sure to be on the periphery of the city, depriving the former residents of their right to the city. The sociospatial stratification and involuntary downward mobility brought about and intensified by the urban redevelopments of the last two decades have left those affected urban core residents dispossessed and bitter.

Guorong’s family was displaced in 1997, when real estate developers were required to provide ready housing for the displaced according to the Shanghai Urban Housing Demolition Management Plan issued in 1991. As a result, his parents and he were relocated from a spacious garden villa shared by more than ten households in the upper-corner along Nanjing Rd in the Jing’an District — an area within two miles of the People’s Square, which has high land values and well-developed social service provision (Wu, 2002) — at the center of the inner-ring, to an apartment outside of the middle-ring in the Meilong area, in the previously rural Minhang District. After more than fifteen years, he was still full of anger and frustration when retelling the account of his relocation:
On that piece of land, the Four Seasons condo building was built and in 2004 or 2005 when it entered the housing market, the per square meter price was more than RMB 60,000 yuan [approx. US $900/ft²], now [2013] probably is more than doubled. At the time of our displacement, the government didn’t mention a word of moving back, and the compensation? They gave us an apartment in Meilong and RMB 7,500 yuan in cash. The market price for the apartment we live now, the one the government gave us, is about RMB 2.7 million yuan, but the worth of our old room in our old neighborhood? More than 6 million!

By comparing the market value of the new apartment with the current value of an apartment in his old neighborhood, Guorong strongly expressed the injustice he felt about the relocation. The potential loss he and his family did not foresee at the time of their relocation was the root of his feelings of deprivation and bitterness. To Guorong and his family, the government teamed up with the developer and tricked them in the displacement and relocation process. Complaint notwithstanding, the apartment shared by Guorong and his parents is more spacious than their previous two rooms. But beyond the monetary disparity he described between the two apartments, there is a disparity in relation to the symbolic capital of urban core living. The loss or gain is not calculated in the apartment’s concrete square meters, but in the volume of the intangible symbolic capital embodied in the built, social and cultural environment of the two housing locations.

This initial redevelopment and the concomitant relocation of the upper-corner residents in the late 1990s had a ripple effect: housing prices close to the edge of the inner-ring spiked, as displaced persons opting for monetary compensation from developers tried to buy housing. In turn, when a new round of redevelopment projects took place in the 2000s, the displaced were forced to move to the middle-ring or to Pudong where housing units were still affordable. The combined effects of the shrinkage of urban core housing stock and the ever-rising housing prices found those displaced in the 2010s relocating to the outer-ring.

Nearly all of my interviewees could recount stories of either themselves or close family members experiencing displacement from the inner- to middle- to outer-ring over the last ten to
twenty years. For example, the marketing manager working for the headquarters of Siemens (China), Yujie, who grew up in Huangpu District, a neighborhood within walking distance of the Bund, now lives with her husband and two young sons in an apartment beyond the north edge of the inner-ring in Zhabei District. Similarly, a social science professor at a top Shanghai university in his 60s, who grew up in old shikumen housing in the upper-corner Luwan district of the previous French Concession, now lives in the area of Jiangwan located outside of the middle-ring. On the land where the professor’s old family house once stood, Xintiandi, the upscale shopping and residential neighborhood, can now be found.

A more recent example is Du’s grandma who lives with his uncle and aunt. Their relocation contract was signed in the first weeks of 2015, at the time of my writing this chapter. The family’s shikumen house was located in Peide Alley (Piede Li) in the corner of Shanhaiiguan Road and Datian Road in the Jing’an District. It was once shared by Du’s family, his aunt and uncle’s family, and his grandma. Peide Alley was one of the few remaining shikumen housing neighborhoods in the urban center. The four relocation apartments, for which they successfully negotiated with the developer and the government, are located in Zhoupu Township in the center of the Greater Pudong Area, beyond the outer-ring. The apartments are located close to subway line No.16 and No.18 and will be ready for occupation in September 2016. Involuntarily, native Shanghairen households were relocated away from the urban core, in exchange for bigger modern living quarters.

Their shared experience reinforces a collective social attachment to Shanghai’s urban center, which is the only authentic space recognized by native Shanghairen as Shanghai. Setha Low and Irwin Altman (1992:4) point out that this attachment to place includes emotional embeddedness, feelings of esteem and belonging, and is especially important to the cultural self-identification and integrity of individuals and social groups. Furthermore, this bonding is most
salient during times of relocation and societal upheaval (Low & Altman, 1992:6). The dispossession of urban central living and its associated symbolic capital is most acutely felt by displaced native Shanghairen, to the degree of threatening their self-identification as Shanghairen.

This relative deprivation of native Shanghairen and their involuntary sociospatial mobility is reflected in a comment about the new linguistic landscape in Shanghai: “English is spoken in the inner-ring, Putonghua middle-ring, and the Shanghai dialect is spoken in the outer-ring.”

However, my data about native Shanghairens’ relocation destinations modify this depiction. During an interview with Qi in the winter of 2013, he suggested that this saying was no longer accurate and was in fact outdated:

This saying has been around for almost ten years. The reality now is actually more nuanced, if not the opposite. The closer to the urban center, the higher the living cost. It is true that in Jing’an or Luwan district, there are many foreigners, but it is not even close to the degree that the common language in the inner-ring is English, even though you can hear more English spoken there than ten years ago.

Despite the more visible and audible presence of affluent foreign expats, the commercial and residential spaces within the inner-ring seem still predominantly Chinese. What has changed is that those spaces were once populated by ordinary working-class native Shanghairen, but now mainly by wealthy Chinese originating elsewhere.

It is again not necessarily true that in the suburbs, or outer-ring and beyond live predominantly displaced native Shanghairen. In Qingpu or Songjiang counties [remote suburbs], the living cost is relatively lower than that in the inner-city, so it would be easier for them [working-class non-natives] to settle down. What I find accurate is that most [native] Shanghairen now live between middle-ring and outer-ring.

Though displaced from the most desirable upper-corner neighborhoods and relocated to the rim of the inner- or middle-ring, native Shanghairen still hold a relative privilege compared to millions of migrant workers. The majority of non-natives possess neither the access to the heavily subsidized urban public housing granted through urban hukou and state-owned work units, nor the
financial capacity to purchase housing from the market (Logan, Fang & Zhang, 2009; White, Wu & Chen, 2008:130). The visible presence of affluent foreign expats conceals the reality of better-off non-natives’ residency in the urban center, and the hardship of the truly disadvantaged migrant workers highlights the dispossession and downward mobility of their native Shanghaiirens neighbors. Nevertheless, what is captured in native Shanghaiirens’ relocation stories and the debunked popular saying is the reality of the quickly changing social stratification in the economic reform era.

Class Restructuring

The massive displacement and relocation of urban residents in Shanghai in the last two decades, especially those driven away from the most desirable upper-corner neighborhoods, constitute a story of a discriminatory urban political economy. But unlike market-initiated and profit-driven gentrification cases as we might find in the Western context, the case of Shanghai illustrates the most recent power shifts on the national scale and suggests the rising of the new elites.

Since the 1990s, the urban landscape in Shanghai saw the birth of new elites, at the expense of old elites whom the communist party had fostered and put into place in the Maoist era. As we saw in chapter two, the creation of the upper- and lower-corner distinction in early 20th century Shanghai was a manifestation of social hierarchy of the semi-colonial past — when better quality housing was built for and occupied by colonizers or affluent Chinese merchants and political elites of the Republic era (1911-1949). Through a close examination of Guorong’s housing situation over three generations, I will show how housing allocation in Shanghai is a story of power and class, and further, how it illustrates the shift in the party’s favoritism. The multiple rounds of relocation and shifts in geo-social mobility experienced by his family constitute just one example
of hundreds of thousands of native Shanghairens’ family stories, and Guorong’s story will serve as the paradigmatic example of the shifted social stratification.

Guorong’s previous neighbors sharing the four-floor single-family house in the Zhang Garden\(^2\) indicates the important role housing played in the recognition of elite status in the pre-1990s Shanghai. The pre-1949 elites were replaced by communist-era elites such as Guorong’s grandparents, and later in the 1990s, Maoist-era elites were displaced to make way for building infrastructure for the global-city-to-be. Below is how Guorong briefly described the households sharing that garden villa with his family:

My paternal grandfather came to Shanghai with the Liberation Army in 1949, and was assigned housing in the mansion that once belonged to a senior official of Kuomintang Party of the Republic [of China] (1911-1949). The four story house was shared by 16 households, and the three bathrooms and one big kitchen on the first floor were shared by all.

Guorong gives a vivid depiction of the Maoist elites in the building he grew up in. When the old elites of the Kuomintang Party in the Republic era were driven out to Taiwan in 1949, the single-family occupancy house was awarded to the new elite in the Maoist era. They comprised the People’s Liberation Army officer, Communist Party members employed in the new municipal government, renowned intellectuals and artists useful for the party’s propaganda, technocrat, ‘red’ revolutionary workers and some old elite renounced their affiliation with the capitalist West or the Kuomintang Party:

On the first floor were retired municipal government officials, and a professor from Fudan University. There were six households on the second floor, and from room 201 to 206 were families of a senior electrician, a single woman returned from the U.S., a cameraman working at the Shanghai TV Station, and both household heads of room 204 and 205 worked in the municipal government. People living in room 206 didn’t talk much to neighbors. On the third floor there were four big rooms, occupied by four families. Room 301 was by a guy with connection to the district

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\(^2\) Zhang Garden was initially built as a spacious park west of the International Settlement where elites came for leisure (Pan 1982:68-70). Later, as an upscale residential neighborhood, it occupied the area north to West Beijing Road, south to Weihai Road, east to Shimen No.1 Road, and west to Shanxi South Road (Cheng, 1987).
government. The retiree from the municipal government in room 302 raised many pigeons, and I remember visiting him often to see the birds when I was little. The famous movie director Shen Xilin and his wife lived in room 303. The woman who lived in room 304 is said to have connection with Kuomintang Party, and married a “red” worker to get out of political trouble. Our family occupied the entire fourth floor, two huge rooms. My uncle and aunt lived in the smaller one, and my parents and I lived in the bigger one with grandparents.

A low standard of living was nearly universal in the “redistributive economy” in the Maoist era. Earnings and resources were collected by the state and redistributed to individuals according to their positions in the politically defined and ranked bureaucratic system (Bian & Logan, 1996). Though living in an extremely crowded dwelling, Guorong’s family and his neighbors enjoyed the geographic advantage and the sense of being in the center of everything in metropolitan Shanghai. In a previously single-family occupancy garden villa, tenants would have shared a bathroom with their neighbors, regardless of whether one was working as a party official in the municipal government, or a famous movie director working for the state-owned movie production work-unit, or a proletarian “red” worker.

The structural and behavioral dimensions of the pre-reform status hierarchy as identified by Bian (2002) are exemplified in the different households sharing the villa with Guorong’s grandparents and parents. First of all, the public housing confiscated by the party upon founding the People’s Republic was granted to all urbanites, especially those “liberated” the city, such as Guorong’s paternal grandfather. Secondly, those employed by the state directly (such as the municipal government officials) or indirectly through state-owned work-unit (such as the movie director or the senior electrician) were granted top-tiered housing. Since income was universally low in the pre-reform era, the party instilled social hierarchy and presented their favorites with state-owned, heavily-subsidized rental housing, access to which was contingent on political position, work unit authority, seniority, education and skills (Logan, Fang & Zhang, 2009).
Besides urban *hukou* status and contingent categories associated with education and profession, the individual’s political characterization as “revolutionary” or “anti-revolutionary” was also important. The true revolutionary “red (proletarian)” class and anti-revolution “black (bourgeoisie)” class are defined by a mixture of family class origin and the individual’s political attitude and performances in numerous party-led campaigns (Bian, 2002). In terms of family class origin, the urban poor and property-less peasant belonged to the “red” class, and landed gentry, merchant or industrialist the “black” class. The disadvantage of being categorized as a member of the “black” class could be mitigated through individual’s demonstrations of adherence to the communist party’s leadership and ideology. For example, the female occupant of Room 304 used her marriage arrangement with a revolutionary “red” worker to demonstrate her political attitude, and thus was allowed to remain in the highly desirable housing.

Despite the need to share a single-family house, the living standards for Guorong and all of his neighbors were still higher than the hundreds of thousands who lived in old *shikumen* housing, which did not have indoor plumbing. The sense of loss felt by displaced Shanghairen such as Guorong and his family stemmed from their loss of symbolic capital, embodied in their relative lack of proximity to the urban center, and their loss of relative privilege, represented by the condition and location of their state-allocated housing unit.

Guorong described how he and his neighbors needed to boil water in the shared big kitchen on the first floor and haul it to the shared bathroom on their floor if they wished to take a bath. When he noticed me jotting down that fact, he quickly added, “[r]eally, it was not that bad. It was already much better than the situation in *shikumen* housing.” A similar qualification was given to the crowdedness of the 33 square meter room which Guorong shared with both of his parents from age three to sixteen, and before that, his paternal grandparents as well. That is to say, a space
approximately 350 square feet once served as living room, dining room and bedroom for two couples and the younger couple’s baby. Guorong’s “not that crowded” comment was based on the worse living arrangement endured by the majority of native Shanghairen families living in shikumen housing. But this relative privilege disappeared at the point of their relocation to Minhang district outside of the inner-ring, when hundreds of thousands of native and non-native Shanghairen families remained. Beyond the sense of deprivation experienced by Guorong and his family, the sense of loss shared by millions of displaced and relocated native Shanghairen has other dimensions embedded in the broader picture of Shanghai’s urban redevelopment in the last twenty years.

Multi-dimensional Sense of Loss

The natives’ sense of loss amidst Shanghai’s rising global-city status on the world stage has three dimensions. The first dimension, as discussed above, is their displacement from the urban center, which is the geographical and material base of their Shanghairen identity.

Even when the displaced visit their old neighborhoods, nothing is recognizable apart from the street names. This disconnection with the urban landscape or, more precisely, this disorientation in the new urban landscape, is the second dimension of natives’ loss. It has socioeconomic roots; the discriminatory urban political economy excludes natives based on socioeconomic status. Office towers hosting Fortune 500 headquarters or commercial complexes are beyond the reach of many of the displaced natives. These new offices are not places where many of their job applications would be accepted, and the luxury boutiques are not where many could afford to shop. The space where working-class native Shanghairen used to live, work, and
shop — the neighborhood of *shikumen* housing and alleyway gossip in Shanghai dialect — is now Shanghai’s CBD and upscale shopping centers.

Truth be told, among the glass-façade office towers and shopping centers, a handful of pockets of *shikumen* housing or garden villas have been preserved. But the preservation of historic buildings is mostly driven by economic and political interests rather than by concerns for protecting cultural heritage (Ren, 2011:102) or for relocation of the displaced; what is preserved is a superficial shell for spectacle. The *lilong* housing preserved at Xintiandi is a Shanghai-flavored display of global consumer culture of fashion, cuisine and clubbing, instead of the mingling in alleyways or produce shopping from street vendors. The redevelopment erased the everyday living experiences of crowding, noise, and dinginess in the original neighborhoods. By recalling historic times, it only created a new site for a modern consumerist lifestyle (Shen & Wu, 2011:264). Thus, it has nothing to do with the Shanghairen’s *shikumen*-living lifestyle. The renewed façades and the surrounding pedestrian zone form an Old-Shanghai theme park, and inside is a museum gift shop for those curious about or nostalgic for the cosmopolitan Shanghai of the 1930s.

For a working-class or even middle-class Shanghairen, the only recognizable or familiar element in this theme park is the architectural shell of the place. Their emotional distance from the upscale global consumer culture is not closed by the familiar-looking architecture; on the contrary, it widens. Behind the *shikumen* façade of those historic neighborhoods, the vibe is alien: a stage-set for a play performed by and for other people. The life associated with *shikumen* housing for natives, be it quarreling over shared kitchen space, children roaming the alleyways afterschool, or a sense of a big extended family, is forever gone under bulldozers.

The dispossession of a lifestyle and the dispersion of a community formerly harbored in *shikumen* neighborhoods constitutes this second dimension of loss. David Harvey (2001: 407)
inquiries about which segment of the population benefits from the commodification of local culture; who reaps monopoly rent from the locale’s symbolic capital? Clearly, the answer is not the native Shanghairen. The symbolic capital embodied in the vernacular *shikumen* housing and associated way of living is the charm, distinctive ambiance, and proof of authenticity of those urban central neighborhoods. However, the long term contributions of natives to this reservoir of symbolic capital over decades does not grant them access to this Disneyfied *shikumen* neighborhood.

The third dimension of loss is driven by the perception of betrayal by the government in the global-city-making process. In the minds of many dislocated native Shanghairen, their earlier sacrifice, by relocation, is under-recognized and under-appreciated.

The ideological dimension of the displacement in Shanghai is quintessential of the communist China. The signing of the displacement and relocation agreement bestows the honor of sacrificing personal gain for the collective good. For example, the government slogan for the 2005 World Expo Displacement Project (to make space for the 2010 Shanghai World Expo) reads: “Caring about the World Expo, For the Interests of the Whole, and Saying Goodbye to Old Homes with a Smile”.\(^\text{27}\) This slogan suggested not only a politically correct attitude to come to terms with one’s displacement, but also a performative action – smiling – to show one’s contentedness with the relocation. Thirty-one hundred households signed the relocation agreement during the first phase of the relocation; in the process, they were taught a lesson to sacrifice “willingly” for the collective good.

The particular sacrifice here is to support the government’s plan to host the 2010 World Expo, which, coupled with the 2008 Beijing Olympics, was part of a larger goal to shift the world’s view of the country, “a kind of one-two punch designed to knock-out old conceptions of China (Wasserstrom, 2009:127).” Furthermore, the assumption of the displaced was surely that the new Shanghai would still be theirs. Their willingness to relocate was not a renouncement of their right to the city. It was for their modern Shanghai, and for the connection to the West that they were deprived of during the Maoist era, that they were willing to sacrifice personal immediate interests.

The reality of the life after the relocation is harsher than anticipated when those displaced need to rely on themselves to move back, and are no longer cared about by their former district government. In Guorong’s case, their current apartment by the middle-ring, given to them by the government, is worth RMB 2.7 million yuan. This is less than half the worth of an equivalent apartment in his old neighborhood. As an IT manager whose annual income is RMB 150,000 yuan, and who is living with his pensioner parents, Guorong does not dare to dream of moving back to his old neighborhood.

The new luxury condos are well beyond former residents’ affordability and instead cater to the new elite, who are not necessarily natives. The new residents could be from anywhere, while the old residents are, without exception, native Shanghairen. Using hukou status data of two inner-ring neighborhoods, He and Wu highlight that 100 percent residents of Jinganli, a declined lilong housing neighborhood are native Shanghairen, while 35 percent of Zhongyuan Liangwancheng, an upscale new housing development by the cleaned-up Suzhou Creek are non-natives (2007:193-97).

Though the area of the municipality of Shanghai is eight times that of the urban center, Shanghairen is the identification reserved to people living in that highly dense core of eighty-six
square kilometers (approx. 21,250 acres). For them, leaving there would mean being thrown out into the backward remote rural area (Yu, 2010). So when they were relocated to Meilong area in the previous Minhang Township, or Zhoupu Township in the previously rural Pudong, native Shanghairen left behind the very urban space that molded their Shanghairen identity.

In essence, the growth machine indiscriminately forced native Shanghairen to pave the road — quite literally, as the homes of Guorong and his neighbors were demolished to make way for the construction of the Nanjing West Road Station on the No.2 subway line — for building a global city in the economic reform era. As Low and Altman (1992:10) point out, “the place may be a medium or milieu which embeds and is a repository of a variety of life experiences, is central to those experiences, and is inseparable from them.” The displacement broke the physical bond native Shanghairen have to the urban core landscape. At the same time, the relocation strengthened their emotional attachment and desire to reclaim the place which had provided them with self-esteem, self-worth, and self-pride. To assert the symbolic claims to their old neighborhoods and urban Shanghai lifestyle, and to reaffirm their Shanghairen identity, native Shanghairen bring the intangible but concrete signifier, Shanghai dialect, into focus. However, what they find is that the practice of the dialect is slipping away from them as well.

Dispersion of the Speech Community

The linguistic consequences of displacement and relocation for the former residents has rarely been discussed in literature on changing urban landscapes of China. Instead, the focus has mostly been on the policies driving the changes, and the exclusiveness of the emerging gated communities (e.g. Logan, 2004; Miao, 2003; Tian & Wong, 2007; Wu, 2003; Zhou & Logan, 1996). Milroy and Milroy (1985:56-7) point out that one important mechanism to encourage
stability in the use of a dialect is the informal pressure exerted by members of a peer group existing in well-defined territorial communities. In the global-city-making process, dislocation and community disintegration broke down the dense Shanghai urban central *shikumen* communities, violently disrupting the territorial prerequisite for the practice of speaking the Shanghai dialect.

Since the birth and development of the hybrid Shanghai dialect are attributed to the waves of migrants settling down in the city over the last century and half, the spatial component is of great importance for the dialect speech community. When the renowned Chinese linguist and Shanghai dialect expert Qian Nairong (2007:12) defines Shanghai dialect, he stresses the historical urban Shanghai as the geographical boundary in discussing the dialect’s history and changes. In the pre-reform era, this urban speech community excluded the entire Pudong region, and the majority of areas outside of the inner ring, which were categorized as rural.

The relocation of more than one million Shanghairen households from the urban center to mostly outside of the inner-ring, and to Pudong, uprooted the Shanghai dialect speech community from the territory which defined it spatially. During the first wave of urban renewal and redevelopment in the early 1990s, ready-for-move-in housing in the periphery was provided to the displaced, which enabled a mini speech community to survive. Even today, the dialect is still spoken in certain “relocation buildings (*dongqian fang*).” As Lue, a retired editor from *Xinmin Evening Newspaper*, told me:

I have many friends used to live in the city center, in Jing’an district, all native Shanghairen. They were all displaced and relocated to Hanghua or Minghang\(^{28}\)[in the late 1990s]. Those were bleak and desolate areas, very remote when they moved. Now it is more connected with the urban center with the subway line, and there are lots and lots of non-natives [living there]. The funny thing is as soon as you climb up the stairs of old relocation buildings, would you hear the Shanghai dialect [in hallways].

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\(^{28}\) Hanghua area sits between the middle and outer ring, and Minghang district is mostly outside of the outer-ring.
Those islands of Shanghai dialect speech community, which are so removed from the urban center, amazed Lue. It clearly shows the importance of geographical proximity for language vitality. For Shanghai dialect to be sustained, there needs to be a space for neighboring, as well as a group of neighbors capable of communicating in the dialect. These are the two prerequisites for the Shanghai dialect to survive as a language in active, social use, as opposed to surviving as a tape recording played in a folk culture museum.

In addition to the survival of these pockets of Shanghai dialect speech community, Lue also vividly illustrates the segregated housing situation in those recently developed outskirt urban areas. Those displaced from the center formed small Shanghai dialect speech communities in government-built relocation buildings, which were surrounded by new housing developments inhabited mostly by lower middle-class non-natives because of the relatively low housing and rental price in those peripheral areas. Lue’s description of the linguistic space in those neighborhoods sounds similar to a depiction of a Chinatown in the North American context: an island of a “foreign” language, preserved but marginalized by the mainstream society. What is different is the fact that those Shanghai dialect speakers do not live in a foreign land, but rather still live in their native municipality of Shanghai.

To investigate the linguistic scene in a relocation neighborhood, I travelled to Sanlin Township outside middle-ring in Pudong in the winter of 2013. At that point it looked quite desolate and bleak. Getting out of the Pusan Road Station of the No.11 subway line, I saw broad but empty sidewalks, new gated apartment complexes, vacant lots of weeds, and a total lack of shops. I was told by Ling Jie, the principal of a private kindergarten there, that it was much better now than seven years ago when she had opened the kindergarten.
The kindergarten made its name by teaching the Shanghai dialect. Ling explained to me about her kindergarten’s popularity:

There are many “relocation buildings” here in Sanlin to house those displaced by the Shanghai Expo 2010. For those parents relocated from Puxi, they had a strong sense of loss, away from the atmosphere and culture of the urban Shanghai, thus us teaching their kids Shanghai dialect is such a big comfort.

The responses of the native Shanghairesen parents to the Shanghai dialect teaching, as described by Ling, suggest a positive future instead of endangerment for the Shanghai dialect. What is not so helpful, however, is the current linguistic landscape in Sanlin. Since the rural Sanlin people do not speak the urban version of the Shanghai dialect, the language for them to communicate with the relocated native urban Shanghairesen from Puxi would be Putonghua Mandarin: the lingua franca to communicate with both rural and urban native Shanghairesen. The prevalence and dominance of Putonghua speaking is the linguistic context of the kindergarten’s Shanghai dialect initiative. If Shanghai dialect was still the lingua franca, as was the case in the pre-1990s Shanghai, Shanghai dialect teaching would not be a subject in kindergarten curriculum. If the urban Shanghairesen had not been displaced to the rezoned, previously rural Pudong, the use of the Shanghai dialect would not serve as their connection to urban living and a much-needed reaffirmation of their Shanghairen identity.

To those dislocated parents, the removal from inner-ring Puxi neighborhoods has a double dimension, both geographic and linguistic. Though the urbanization process rezoned Sanlin Township as part of urban Shanghai, the categorical change did not shorten the distance. Across the Huangpu River is the old home where they cannot afford to live. At the very least, they hope to continue speaking Shanghai dialect at home and with their children, to maintain the connection with the city and to assert their Shanghairesen identity. The dialect-teaching offered at Ling Jie’s Modern Baby Kindergarten in this remote Pudong neighborhood brings the warmth of home to
those displaced households. Geographically, they are displaced; but linguistically, they are still holding onto Shanghai’s urban culture.

Across the Huangpu River, back in Puxi, the presence of rural Shanghairen speaking another version of the dialect is less of a danger to the dialect than the increasing presence of Putonghua-speaking non-natives. The logic of the real estate market, coupled with the deep-rooted desire to live in the upper-corner among native Shanghairen, worked to dismantle islands of the speech community in “relocation building” neighborhoods. Living in the periphery means greater inconvenience of the daily commute, poor infrastructure and limited social services, though in a larger and newer unit. The initial relocation was involuntary, but over time, those with more financial resources purchased housing closer to the urban center and sold or rented out their apartments in the “relocation buildings” to non-natives.

Guorong, who has lived in Meilong with his parents since the relocation in 1997, explained the transition to me:

Buildings in our neighborhood are mostly ‘relocation buildings (dongqian fang)’ initially inhabited by old neighbors from the urban center. At the beginning, you heard Shanghai dialect spoken everywhere, but now it is totally different. If you walk around my neighborhood in the morning, all you hear is quarrel over dogs, whose dog bit whose, Putonghua with Shanxi accent, with Northeastern accent, absolutely no Shanghai dialect. I don’t hear much people in my neighborhood speaking the dialect any more.

It appears that many of Guorong’s relocated neighbors had moved away, but he and his family stayed. Over the years, his neighborhood has changed from a community of relocated native Shanghairen to a mixed community of both natives and non-natives from all across the country (predominantly non-natives, according to Guorong). The working of the real estate market created a residential community that was socioeconomically more homogeneous, but linguistically more heterogeneous.
This is in stark contrast to pre-1990s Shanghai when housing was controlled and redistributed by the municipal government and state-owned work units. More often than not, employees of various ranks, seniority or professions lived in the same building owned by a single work unit, which hired only those with a Shanghai urban hukou. That means those more linguistically homogenous neighborhoods were of native Shanghairen with diverse habitus and socioeconomic status. From the example of Guorong’s previous neighbors in that garden villa, we have seen a proletarian “red” worker lived next door to a famous movie director, and to municipal government officials.

Relocation from *shikumen* or *lilong* housing to more spacious apartments over the last two decades not only moved millions of native Shanghairen away from the metropolitan core to live in mixed-origin neighborhoods but also changed their relation to public space in the neighborhood they live in. The overcrowded living conditions in *shikumen* housing meant intermingling in public spaces such as alleyways and shared kitchens, which served as the spatial condition for building a close-knit community and practicing the Shanghai dialect. This condition disappeared in the relocation and the associated adoption of apartment-living. To illustrate the change, Lu Yan, an elementary school teacher in her early 40s, compared her childhood experience with her son’s:

> When I was young [1980s], I played with neighbors in the alleyway all the time. Now my son is 9 years old. What does he do after school? Watching TV alone at home. It’s very difficult for him to make friends in the neighborhood because most of his classmates don’t live close by, or they need to stay at home to do homework.

Lu Yan made this comparison to explain why her son did not speak Shanghai dialect with his classmates and friends. To her, it is not only the outworking of the discriminatory language ideology taught to him at school, or the Putonghua TV programs he watched, but also the linguistic environment and social circles.
Sacrificed in the housing upgrade are one’s own opportunities to interact with one’s neighbors and the children’s opportunities to play with classmates after school: opportunities, therefore, to practice the Shanghai dialect. As Lu Yan elaborated:

Comparing to our times, they don’t play with each other much. I remember when I was in elementary school, we didn’t even have landline telephones, and you didn’t need to [arrange playdates with it]. You just went out into the alley and shouted out: “let’s meet up after dinner and play!” Kids would then show up and play all sorts of alleyway games.

During childhood, Lu Yan lived with her parents and grandparents in a small dwelling in an old shikumen housing complex in the working-class Hongkou district close to the industrial end of the Bund. Now with her husband, her mother and her son, she lives in a nice three-bedroom condo in Jiangwan area of the Yangpu district beyond the middle-ring. She does not seem to regret moving away from the old working-class shikumen housing, in contrast to those research participants who grew up in Western-looking villas or upscale lilong housing in the former foreign settlements. To her, the cash compensation from relocation enabled her and her family to purchase nicer housing in an upscale (albeit more remote) neighborhood. What she lamented was the loss of community and tangible social circles close to her home. Instead of the everyday mingling in shared courtyards and alleyways she used to experience in the old neighborhood, now talk with neighbors is mostly limited to “Hello” and “Bye” when riding the elevator together. Both the circle of classmates living close by and the afterschool alleyway games she once enjoyed are lost to her son, who lives in an upscale apartment with his own room.

The reconstruction of the Shanghai dialect speech community is not as easy as building residential high rises. For a language to stay alive, two important conditions are necessary. Firstly, the speech community must live in close proximity to allow communication to take place. And secondly, people in that community must practice the language with each other on a regular basis. As we see at Meilong in Puxi and Sanlin in Pudong, the dongqian xiaoqu (relocation
neighborhoods), the logic of the real estate market leads to the dismantling of the speech community, although some odd cases such as the one in Hanghua remains. Although Gumperz’s relational definition of a speech community (2001:43) emphasizes the presence of the non-speakers to identify the boundary, living in close proximity with non-speakers of the Shanghai dialect inevitably leads to bilingual Shanghaiiren opting to communicate in Putonghua. Further, the modern lifestyle, conducted largely behind locked apartment doors, diminishes the use of public space and limits the opportunity for interaction between neighbors.

The linguistic landscape inside of the inner-ring, though not dominated by English (as demonstrated above), is no less hostile to the Shanghai dialect. Putonghua dominates the linguistic space in those upscale condominiums. Zhou Zhou is a native Shanghaiiren in her mid-30s who once worked for Google China and is now a senior director at EF Education First; her husband once worked as an investment banker for Goldman Sachs Hong Kong and is now a high-rank financial officer at Alibaba. They live in one of those upscale high rise condos.

Zhou Zhou understood the reasons behind the changed linguistic environment in urban central Shanghai as twofold: the geographical dislocation and dispersion of native Shanghaiiren; and the influx of Putonghua-speaking non-natives, to whom the Shanghai dialect is as unintelligible as a foreign language. As she put it:

There is nowhere in Shanghai now that can claim to have solely native Shanghaiiren residents. Say you initiate a conversation with a stranger in your building in Shanghai dialect, more than likely that s/he [being a non-native] would reply in Putonghua and even give you a dirty look suggesting your rudeness of using [an informal] language that they wouldn’t have known how to speak.

The way she was treated by equally affluent neighbors when initiating a conversation in the Shanghai dialect explains why she now regards Putonghua as a default language choice:

Encountering situations like that for a few times and you [being a native] would stop using Shanghai dialect with strangers. There is no solution, no future for Shanghai dialect. There is no space for it.
Talking from personal experience, Zhou Zhou sees no future for Shanghai dialect when the public space for its practice has evaporated in the process of urban redevelopment and internal migration. Thus, because of the language ideology — where and when it is proper to speak which language, and how the language choice reflects on the speaker — speaking Putonghua instead of the Shanghai dialect to strangers is a practical and calculated choice in current urban Shanghai.

Between the dispersion of the Shanghai dialect speech community and the impossibility of reconstructing such a community in new residential neighborhoods all across the city, the outlook is grim for the Shanghai dialect. In the global-city-making process, what is also lost in the minds of millions of native Shanghairen is the city’s symbolic capital, the durable distinctiveness represented in its East-meets-West built environment from the semi-colonial times. Bulldozers smashed not only dilapidated shikumen housing, but also garden villas, art-deco apartment buildings and their sycamore-tree-lined neighborhoods. In the last two decades, nationwide urbanization rendered Chinese urban centers uniform with glass façade office towers and high-rise apartment buildings. In the same time period rises Pudong, the new face of Shanghai, which looks similar to the rest of the modern urban China. Grieving for the loss of an authentic urban space, native Shanghairen embark on a quest to find Shanghai’s distinctive character.

Loss of Urban Character

A city loses its character when such unique features as the vernacular architecture, the layout of the urban neighborhoods, the commercial scene, and the lifestyle of its inhabitants are no different from any other city. In the economic-reform era, this is exactly what has happened to many, if not all, Chinese cities under the public-private partnership in the urbanization and urban redevelopment process. This singular trajectory of urban changes grew from a “catch-up-with-the-
West” ideology which was initiated at the governmental level and facilitated by real estate developers. The erasure of local characteristics was carried out in the name of progress, in the era of neoliberalism, with Chinese characters (Harvey, 2005).

The visible proof of Shanghai becoming a node in the network of global cities is its new uniformed look, which signifies consumerism and suggests accommodation for capitalist globalization. After decades of neglect and disinvestment in the Maoist era, this global city look initially made natives proud and made non-natives feel welcomed and included. By the same token, vernacular built environments such as shikumen housing alienates non-natives who were not familiar with the lifestyle associated with it. Between 1995 and 2013, according to the Shanghai Statistical Bureau, roughly eighty million square meters of residential neighborhoods were demolished or taken through eminent domain.29 With the city changed beyond recognition, the earlier excitement among natives was replaced by bewilderment and disorientation. Proshansky et al. (1983) explain that individual’s place identity involves memories, feelings, attitudes, preferences and values associated with everyday physical environment. What the overhaul of the familiar residential neighborhoods and the new uniformed urban landscape brought to native Shanghairen is the realization that there is no longer a distinctive place they can identify as Shanghai, to differentiate the city from other Chinese cities, and to anchor their place identity.

The nationwide urbanization and building frenzy in the economic reform era brought urban China uniform-looking modern infrastructure, on par with the redeveloped Shanghai, though on a smaller scale. Once wrapped in a “Paris of the Orient” air of fame and privilege, the unique architectural character of Shanghai was quickly disappearing into dust under bulldozers. When the East-meets-West urban landscape represented by shikumen housing neighborhoods was to a large

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extent erased from the urban landscape, native Shanghairen started to reject the new image of Shanghai. Instead of a dialogue between the old and the new, and the reproduction of an authentic urban space through negotiation and appropriation, what occupies the urban core in Puxi and the waterfront CBD in Pudong now is the face of a global city, indistinguishable from others.

Decentralization of power from the central government provided great freedom for local governments to implement entrepreneurial development policies (Ren, 2011:138). City centers were hollowed out at their core and both people and economic activity were shifted to outer zones (Wang & Zhou, 1999; Zhou & Ma, 2000). Inspired by the success of urban renewal to increase property values and to enhance the image of top-tier cities like Beijing and Shanghai, other municipalities have begun replicating the process. It has been occurring in most economically vibrant cities in the eastern part of the country, such as Beijing (Zhou & Logan, 2008:143), Shanghai (Gao & Jiang, 2002), the southern metropolis Guangzhou in Canton (Xie & Ning, 2002; Zhou & Xu, 1996), the northern industrial city Shenyang (Zhou & Meng, 1997), Dalian (Chai & Zhou, 2000), and big cities in the Yangtze Delta region close to Shanghai, such as Hangzhou (Feng & Zhou, 2002; Zhou, 1997), Suzhou, Wuxi and Changzhou (Zhang, 1998).

What do these cities’ urban centers look like after redevelopments? The commodification and redevelopment of urban centers in China introduced architectural designs transplanted from elsewhere to project an “imagined” global image (King & Kusno, 2000; Wai, 2006). Government officials in partnership with real estate developers cared little about the consequences for the locals, because the image of the city on a global scale would matter more for the trajectory of their political career and profit margins than the concrete experience of the locals. City officials regard the symbolic capital carried by global-oriented urban landscapes as leverage to win the inter-city
competition (Yeoh, 2005; Kong, 2007) qualified in terms of attracting tourists, catering to the emerging middle class (Robinson & Goodman, 1996) and luring capital investments.

Urban redevelopments in China involve two steps: a massive upgrade of urban infrastructures to adopt a uniformed “global city look,” followed by a few preservation-themed projects bearing vernacular flavor to seek competitive edge despite the destruction of local culture and social fabric accomplished in the upgrade. In the search for a competitive edge through the urban built environment, a few major second-tier cities such as Nanjing\(^{30}\) (Song & Wu, 2010), Kunming\(^{31}\) (Zhang, 2006) and Chengdu\(^{32}\) (Huang & Yang, 2010) have experienced preservation-based redevelopment and gentrification since the 2000s. Some others, instead of drawing inspiration from vernacular architectural features, opted for copying already-proven, globally successful models of redevelopment.

Seeing the success of Xintiandi, the profit-driven, preservation-anchoring redevelopment project in Shanghai, mayors of other Chinese cities sent invitations to the architects responsible for the project, asking them to clone Xintiandi in their cities. The Xihu (West Lake) Xintiandi has already been completed in Hangzhou, a two-hour train ride south of Shanghai. Chongqing in the inland Sichuan province plans to have its (Xin)Tiandi completed in 2018.\(^{33}\) Just like Xintiandi in Shanghai, these projects do not bring historical relevance to their cities; instead, they bring global consumer culture to China’s new rich. Even when a few vernacular architectural elements are incorporated, the essence of that urban space is altered. Borrowing an old Chinese saying, it is using an old bottle to sell new wine (jiu ping zhuang xin jiu). The practice can only fool dilettantes

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\(^{30}\) The provincial capital of Jiangsu province adjacent to Shanghai

\(^{31}\) The provincial capital of the Yunnan province

\(^{32}\) A major political, economic and cultural center of Sichuan province in Western China

and can only appeal to those who value the outlook of global modernity more than the vernacular flavor.

The irony of nationwide urban redevelopments for inter-city competitive edge is that when cities try to imitate each other, the strategy might fail to boost local standing, especially when “the advantage of being the first to do it has been lost” as Molotch et al. (2000:818) argue in their comparative study of two California cities. Furthermore, these copycat bolstering measures have brought uniformity and McDonaldization (Ritzer, 1999), instead of distinctiveness to the urban landscape across the country. It appears counter-intuitive that inter-city competitions do not generate more innovation, but instead a uniform approach to demolition, building modern but nondescript high-rises, along with the preservation of a few historic buildings to stimulate tourism and consumption. To a certain extent, glass-façade office towers are no different than renovated historic landmark buildings because both of them represent the sweeping forces of state-led economic reform and capitalist globalization.

Within less than twenty years, Chinese urbanites are now surrounded by those identical looking office towers and residential high-rises. They treat them less as spectacles than surrogates of Western lifestyle and modernity, which had been refused to them for decades. The rising of other Chinese cities means Shanghai is no longer the only Chinese modern metropolis, a title and recognition held dearly by native Shanghairen for decades is slipping away more quickly than they can comprehend. It is against this backdrop, native Shanghairen came to realize the loss of the distinctive character of Shanghai, and Chinese cities in general.

Having witnessed how Shanghai’s urban center has been changed beyond recognition, native Shanghairen are even more surprised to see how widespread that alien, modern look is across the country. For example, working as a product manager in a French company, Peng traveled
around the country for product launch and roadshows on a regular basis. Beyond Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou, the three top-tier cities, he has been to many second- and third-tier cities with populations of more than one million. He was disappointed at the lack of characteristics of urban China in general:

Because of work, I have been to many Chinese cities, big or small, more than thirty a year. Even though some of them claimed to be tourist cities, none of them, none of Chinese cities has its own character.

In his judgment, Peng emphasized those cities recognized as “tourist cities” (luyou chengshi), which is a recognition awarded by the China National Tourism Administration based on the evaluation of a city’s tourism resources and the development of the tourist industry. By invoking this category, Peng stressed that if those cities, recognized as such, failed to demonstrate their local character, then other cities lacking the title would be subject to even greater loss of character.

What exactly are the distinctive characters of a city? Other than historic landmarks or spectacles, how could we tell one city apart from another? Peng suggested that the vanishing vernacular urban landscape was the answer:

To me, a city’s characteristics are the Forbidden City in Beijing, the Drum Tower in Xi’an, or some folk arts in the Northwest. But the distinguishing features between Chinese cities? Really, any city in mainland China, northeast to Shenyang, or south to Guangzhou, every downtown looks the same, no difference!

To him, landmarked historical sites are certainly distinctions, but the urban built environment is much more than a few tourist sites. Moreover, not every city in vast China is blessed with being a capital of past dynasties. He elaborated on the sameness of those urban China downtowns in this way:

In Chinese cities, all neighborhoods look the same. All buildings look the same, all shopping malls look the same, even all railway stations! Airports? After the Pudong

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34 Beijing was the capital city of small or large empires in China since BC 770. Xi’an is the current provincial capital of Shannxi. Historically it was the starting point of the Silk Road, and hosted the capital of thirteen kingdoms and empires since BC 202.
International Airport was built, the design and blueprints were sold to many cities. All look the same, even interior design materials!

The examples he gave, such as identical shopping malls or transit hubs, were the kind of non-places Auge (1995:78) identifies that “cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity.”

Those non-places constructed during China’s economic boom over the last two decades do not have locally rooted anthropological meanings, and certainly do not integrate residents’ earlier experiences with the locale. In Relph (1976)’s word, what they represent is placelessness. Those characterless urban centers are places without any distinguishing features. A monopoly of urban built environments most accommodating to the global economy is the most hostile to unstandardized, unruly, locale-specific vernaculars, in relation to both architecture and urban planning.

The creation of non-places is consistent with the ideology of neoliberal urbanism, in ways to generate monopoly rent for developers and to accommodate capitalist globalization. Over our lunch interview at a restaurant on the Bund with the view of the Pudong waterfront CBD (see Figure 4.1), Zhang Weiyun, a female native Shanghairen who works as a senior marketing manager at PepsiCo, pointed out how China embraces neoliberalism by eliminating local character:

Look, do you see [the Pudong waterfront skyline has] any difference from the Victoria Harbor in Hong Kong? The decision makers at the municipal and the central government level don’t think Shanghai needs any distinctive character. The China now doesn’t appreciate diversity.

The creation of identical urban landscapes follows the capitalist globalization’s logic of rational, functional and revenue-maximization. To replicate proven models of generating revenue and urban spatial configurations seems to be the guaranteed road to success. Therefore, there is no space for less-profitable configurations generated locally, bearing vernacular features for non-profit-generating purposes, such as sense of belonging, collective memories, local solidarity, etc. In the
end, the prototypical built environment in globalizing cities is celebrated by policy makers as modern and cosmopolitan, though rootless and placeless in the eyes of local residents.

Considering the identical-looking urban landscape, what is left to inform us about the identity of a particular place, to differentiate one urban center from another? The well-traveled, retired radio station editor Ge vividly depicted how important language was to help him distinguish a city:

It is highly homogenized, anywhere you go in China. Last year I went to Qaramay City. The city is a rich oil town, and looks identical to Shanghai! I felt I had never left Shanghai after getting off the plane there. A joke I always tell is that if I parachute out of a plane blindfolded, I can’t tell where I am after landing. How did I realize that I was no longer in Shanghai? There are Uyghur there speaking their language. Language is the only tool to tell the difference.

The ethnic minority’s language is the only indicator Ge was able to find to tell one city apart from another. The example he gave, Qaramay City, is located in the northern desert area of the Uyghur Autonomous Region close to the border of Kazakhstan, and more than 2,600 miles away from

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35 A Turkic language with an Arabic-based alphabet spoken in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.
Shanghai, which sits on the Pacific coast. Being Han Chinese, Ge did not find the cultural and ethnic characteristics he had anticipated in this city which historically has a large ethnic minority Uyghur presence. That is to say, even remote cities in ethnic minority autonomous regions are not saved from the sweeping unified look of the new urban China.

Beyond the urban built environment, the “China Dream” vision has further strengthened the uniformity of the linguistic sphere in the future of urban China. While ethnic minorities are still guaranteed some freedom to speak their own language, Putonghua is the mandate for ninety-two percent of the country’s population, the Han Chinese majority. For them, the local dialect serves as an ever more important signifier for their city and their own identity. To Peng, to preserve the local dialect is the last effort to combat total loss of urban character:

The only thing left is dialect, to tell where you are from and who you are! If the linguistic difference is also wiped out, then there is no distinguishing feature of the people, or of the city.

It is the urban landscape, and the people living in it, that imbues a city with soul. The modernization and developmental policies of the economic reform era and the sweeping power of capitalist globalization ultimately transformed the landscape of urban China and the Chinese urbanites themselves. As Peng stressed, if deprived of a linguistic difference, one could hardly tell the origin and identity of any individual. Out of the same dread of losing local character, native Shanghaires have distanced themselves from Pudong, the new, modern face of Shanghai, on the streets of which one rarely hears Shanghai dialect.

*Pudong is not My Shanghai*

The disconnection with the uniform built environment in Pudong felt by native Shanghaires, and their sense of loss from the displacement process, led to a rejection of Pudong.
Three strategies have been developed to discredit the new face of the global-city-to-be Shanghai, juxtaposing it with Puxi, the de facto and de jure cosmopolitan Shanghai before the 1990s. Firstly, native Shanghairen reject the architectural spectacles newly built in Pudong, pointing out their placelessness and disconnection with the locale. Secondly, those financially better off make their preference for Puxi clear when considering relocation. Lastly, the rejection of Pudong is built into a consensual identification of being a Shanghairen.

Over a century’s worth of vicissitudes defines the soul of the city, and the native Shanghairen’s place identity is bound up with the layered urban history in Puxi. The renowned Japanese architect, Kisho Kurokawa (1991) once said that without historical imprints and traces underlining the urban built environment, we are at a loss in terms of reading and understanding the culture of the city, and the city becomes bland. The built environment of a city not only constructs its image, but also has important implications for an individual’s social identity and embodies the city’s collective memory (Zukin, 1995:19). When the old urban landscape disappeared, the layered urban history lost its material basis; the new buildings that sprouted up to fill the physical void only brought strangeness and anxiety to native Shanghairen (Xu, 2004: 213-14). In addition to the disorientation occurring in city center, every native Shanghairen I interviewed discussed their discomfort with and rejection of the new landmarks in Pudong.

Prior to 1994, when the Oriental Pearl TV Tower rose on the east bank of Huangpu River, all of the city’s significant landmarks had been located in Puxi. At that time and even until now, to many natives Pudong seemed, as it had for more than a century before, a place apart, not really a section of their metropolis at all. Before the 1990s, many residents of Shanghai lived out their lives without ever venturing across the river (Wasserstrom, 2009:118). The current capitalist globalization, represented by the newly configured urban landscape and conspicuous consumption
patterns, came as a shock to native Shanghairen. Unlike their non-native counterparts, who came to Shanghai for a taste of Western urban modernity for the first time, the natives are trying to realign their understanding of the West and of modernity in Shanghai’s rapidly changing reality.

The physical changes accompanying Shanghai’s new global city status remind native Shanghairen every day about their loss. The spectacles that put Shanghai on the world map inspire indifference in Shanghairen to the degree that they proudly reveal they have never visited the Oriental Pearl TV Tower, which is now a symbol of Shanghai shown on postcards, domestic and Western TV news, Hollywood movies, videogames and travel magazines; for example, the tower serves as the focal point in “The Next Time You’re in Shanghai,” from the March 2015 issue

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36 The 23rd in the Bond franchise, *Skyfall* (2012); *Mission Impossible: 3* (2006); or *Godzilla: Final Wars* (2004), in which the monster Anguirus attacks the city and destroys the Oriental Pearl TV Tower.

37 The waterfront CBD of Pudong with the TV Tower in the center is one major landscape scene in the world top video game developer Electronic Art’s (EA) latest downloadable content for the game Battlefield 4, titled “China Rising.”
of *Travel + Leisure* (Figure 4.2). The Shanghai World Financial Center is similarly dismissed as “the bottle-opener” among native Shanghairen. These architectural spectacles are not how native Shanghairen perceive their city. These visual representations of modernity belong to the country, or to the world, but never to them.

Despite Pudong is presented as the image of the globalizing Shanghai, native Shanghairen do not hesitate to voice their aversion of it. It is a reaffirmation of their Puxi-rooted local identity and loyalty to the only authentic place they recognize as Shanghai. It also explains why only two out of my fifty native Shanghairen interviewees, and a handful of my two hundred and fifty native Shanghairen survey respondents, live in Pudong.38 New practicalities such as broad new roads, relatively cheaper housing, and an easier commute to work cannot offset the sense of disconnection and exclusion.

Zhu Zhenmiao, the Chinese language Ph.D. student active in the Shanghai dialect preservation movement showed me a tweet that he posted a few days before and which enjoyed many retweets on Weibo, the Chinese Twitter:

> Shanghai now is not the Shanghai before, it has changed completely. Those [new] buildings in Shanghai are like cancer cells, ugly, pathological, ever spreading. Those skyscrapers will not be demolished in a hundred years, or turn into benign cells. What were and will be demolished are old lilong housing.

Displaced to Pudong, Zhenmiao’s reminiscence of the old Shanghai is both of the tight-knit community congruous with *lilong* housing and the image of the aesthetically harmonious urban landscape in Puxi. In his eyes the urban redevelopment of the last twenty years was an encroachment on the healthy, historic *lilong* housing by hostile skyscrapers. In this juxtaposition,

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38 I used a mixture of snowball sampling and quota sampling to recruit research subjects, and the location of residency was not one of my quota categories. Though the proportion of natives living in Puxi in my sample might not be accurate when compared to the data from the Shanghai Statistical Bureau, it nevertheless shows natives’ preference for living in Puxi.
Puxi is the authentic old space called Shanghai, while Pudong (farmland, in the memory of most adult native Shanghairen) is a global space, a character-loss place they do not identify with.

The second strategy for the rejection of Pudong, the preference for living in Puxi, is driven by this lack of identification. The rejection of Pudong is not necessarily a class-based sociospatial hierarchy of urban neighborhoods, such as the upper-lower corner division in Puxi for the last century. Rather, it segregates the natives and non-natives along the Huangpu River. The natives cling to Puxi, and the non-natives favor the recently urbanized and newly-built Pudong. Close to the CBD by the riverfront in Pudong, there are luxury rentals; more into the heart of Pudong, there are upscale, gated communities such as Lianyang Biyun Community. Both are worlds beyond the means of the majority of native Shanghairen. As Yujie, the marketing manager at the Siemens Headquarters put it:

I used to work for Ford, which provided executives or senior managers from the U.S. luxury condos close to the office in Lujiazui, the Pudong riverfront CBD.

She continued to describe the housing choice of a college classmate of hers, who is from Shenyang in northern China, and whose husband is also non-native:

The apartment Li Zhuo and her husband recently bought is of more than RMB 50,000 yuan per square meter (approx. $800/ft²). It is in the high-end Lianyang Community. There are also quite a few foreign expats living there. The first choice for elites!

Considering that the annual household disposable income in the year of the study (2013) is reportedly RMB 43,851 yuan, according to the Shanghai Statistics Bureau, Yujie certainly gave a vivid depiction of the disparity between the city’s new non-native elites and the mass. The distinction between Puxi and Pudong is no longer the urban versus rural divide as in the pre-1990s, or a class-based preference, rather it has a heavy emotional connotations. The choice of international and national elites to live in upscale Pudong neighborhoods is not the kind of
conspicuous consumption better-off native Shanghairen would emulate. Loyalty and tighter bonds to Puxi make natives draw the line.

It is a preference having more to do with location than housing quality. It indicates the wide-recognized symbolic capital embodied in a particular urban locale. An old saying among native Shanghai residents still popular in the 2000s captures the extreme of this appeal: “rather a bunk bed in Puxi, than an apartment in Pudong” (ning yao Puxi yi zhang chuang, bu yao Pudong yi jian fang). This emphasis on housing location is more powerful now when there are upscale residential neighborhoods in Pudong providing all the amenities the non-native wealthy favor, as Yujie observed.

Housing choice is more available to those economically better off. As we have seen above, the majority of the displaced natives can hardly leap out of their relocated neighborhoods by the middle-ring. The appeal of residence in Puxi, when the international professionals and national elites find all they could ask for from a global city in upscale neighborhoods in Pudong, lies in its connection with the city’s distinctive East-meets-West history and an urban culture developed in the “Paris of the Orient” period in the early 20th century.

Wang Yufeng, who is in his early 40s, grew up in Jing’an district in central Puxi and works as a financial director for a Fortune 500 company. He explained to me:

I don’t like Pudong. There were people asking me why I didn’t move to Pudong since I worked there [the waterfront CBD]. I just don’t like it! Skyscrapers are all over Pudong [CBD], making it not my Shanghai. The reason why I don’t like Pudong is that everything, everywhere is new.

Yufeng’s critique of the urban landscape of Pudong superficially resembles a Luddite’s rejection of the ‘new’ and of ‘progress’; essentially, it points out the character-loss and ahistorical nature of the uniformed modern office towers and residential complexes.
You don’t see any trace of [Shanghai’s local] culture. If you go to Madang Road, or Hengshan Road, you would sense the flavor of Shanghai. Or if you go to Jing’an District, in the Yuyuan Road neighborhood, you can feel the Shanghai character in the air, right there! Pudong, has what?? Merely skyscrapers, all identical!

Yufeng’s disdain for Pudong grows from his nostalgia for the Shanghai he knew growing up and for a neighborhood that bore the character of the former semi-colonial times in its built environment. The Yuyuan Road neighborhood he mentioned is located at the heart of the urban center, less than two miles west of the People’s Square. Home to the Paramount Ballroom, Jing’an Park, Buddhist Jing’an Temple, busy shopping streets and sycamore tree-lined upscale residential streets of lilong housing, garden villas and art-deco apartment buildings, it was once one of the fanciest and most fashionable neighborhoods. Since the late 1990s, urban redevelopment projects displaced many long-term residents from that neighborhood to make way for elevated expressways, broadening urban major thoroughfares, and the erection of office towers.

The charm of the old Yuyuan Road neighborhood lay in its cosmopolitan diversity and its mixing of East and the West, old and new, which Yufeng defined as the character of Shanghai. It is this visually multilayered character, the result of cultural dialogue, negotiation, appropriation and symbiosis with the urban communities that Yufeng did not see in the skyscrapers of Pudong.

Yufeng’s nostalgia for a cosmopolitan past imprinted in that neighborhood serves as a reaffirmation of his connection with the authentic Puxi, and a constant reminder of how inauthentic and un-Shanghai Pudong is. The placeless quality of Pudong, in his eyes, lies in the uniformity of Le Corbusier’s urban planning of skyscrapers, broad sidewalks, and walking-unfriendly super blocks. Compared to the Yuyuan Road neighborhood, the built environment itself and the lack of

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Both are located in the previous French Concession, in the “upper corner”.

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human interaction it engenders in Pudong alienates Yufeng. For these reasons, taking up residence in Pudong simply because of the practicality of his daily commute has no appeal for him.

The centrally-planned, modern but uniform-looking urban built environment is the opposite of diversity and organic growth. Urbanization of the once rural Pudong swallowed any remaining local regional character and regurgitated a cookie-cutter urban landscape void of character. By rejecting architectural spectacles and refusing to live in Pudong, native Shanghaiiren voice their resistance to the top-down global-city building process, an un-democratic process imposed on them by an authoritarian state. Given the impossibility of organizing protests to openly halt the process, native Shanghaiiren resolved to develop strategies to denounce and dis-recognize Pudong as Shanghai.

Pudong epitomizes the natives’ aversion to the urban redevelopment of Shanghai, not only because of Pudong’s disconnectedness with Shanghai’s cosmopolitan past, but also due to its rapid transition from farmland to the new face of Shanghai within a twenty-year span. This quick rise, bolstered by state developmental policies, showed the cosmopolitan Shanghai on the west bank, which acquired world fame more than almost a century ago with little state intervention, little respect. Thus, native Shanghaiiren again and again remind tourists or non-natives that Pudong is not Shanghai. Indeed it is a strategic project initiated, enabled and created by the state, a Special Economic Zone that happens to be located east of the Huangpu River.

The last strategy native Shanghainese deployed to discredit Pudong is to build this attitude into the criteria of Shanghaiiren identity. By articulating a sense of belonging, native Shanghaiiren actively use their housing choice to reaffirm their local identity, as seen by Kerry Jiang, who grew up in the Jing’an District and married an investment banker who is also native to Shanghai:
We native Shanghairen have this deep-rooted preference for Puxi. You know, I am a Shanghairen, therefore I belong in Puxi. It is that simple! I think it applies to all native Shanghairen.

To her, native Shanghairen’s preference for Puxi does not need an explanation; it is accepted as a fundamental part of who they are as Shanghairen. The natives’ Shanghai is in Puxi, which showcases a cosmopolitan hybridity and local agency, instead of a uniformed global modernity and state power.

The contrast between Puxi and Pudong is the juxtaposition of the old and the new, the imprints of colonization of the past and globalization in current times, represented by the geographical opposition between the west and east banks of the Huangpu River. The Bund on the west bank, the epitome of early 20th century cosmopolitan Shanghai, is having a face-off with the recently-erected spectacles on the east bank. The two banks of the Huangpu River, competing images of Shanghai developed a century apart, are both spectacles telling the story of East-meets-West. The two waterfront spectacles, though open and free for everyone to view, are appreciated and appropriated by and for different audiences. To a certain extent, native Shanghairen’s rejection of Pudong is a weapon of the weak, an emotional compensation of their real material loss calculated in their increased socioeconomic and geographical distance from the urban center.

Conclusion

“An ocean receiving hundreds of streams” (hai na bai chuan) has been the motto of Shanghai for more than a century. It portrays Shanghai as a place that absorbs various global trends, including architectural styles, fashions, cuisines, languages, and lifestyles, and appropriates them as her own. This co-existence of trends is one that Shanghai elderlies still vividly recall. It is this kind of hospitality, this kind of embrace of diversity and autonomy, and this kind of wit of re-appropriation that characterized the pre-1949 Shanghai. It sits in sharp contrast to the uniform
urban life in the Maoist era that was characterized by blue and grey outfits, limited goods sold using a ration system and a universal conformity to a singular communist ideology. In the reform era, China’s door to the West was reopened, but the inflows have been highly controlled in the economic sphere and censored in the cultural sphere. Central government’s developmental policies modeled urban China after a single version of global modernity in the hope of catching up with the West. On the ground, it meant to provide a welcoming environment for capital investment and flows of labor force.

The “soul” or distinctive character of Shanghai is more than an attitude toward outside influences, as captured in the motto, but an integration process worked out by millions of Shanghairen. Since the opening of the Treaty Port in 1843, the changes occurring in Shanghai were never wholesale or full replacement of the old with the new, as seen in the current Pudong and many parts of Puxi, but a battle and a negotiated incorporation process that strived to maintain the Chinese vernacular roots while embracing outside trends. Once the most Westernized city in mainland China, Shanghai is at a crossroads. It is in a transitional phase and must strike a balance between the Western culture it was once familiar with, and the rising and dominant Chinese national culture and identity, for which it is not necessarily ready to give up the Shanghai identity.

If *shikumen* housing characterizes Shanghai’s hybridity in the most visible and tangible way, then the Shanghai dialect is the intangible counterpart rooted in the city’s history, and an essential part of the Shanghairen identity. The hostility toward the all–encompassing and uniform “global-city-look” is born from the organic working of the Hai style, and from natives’ insistence on the negotiation phase of the reproduction of urban space. The top-down developmental policies in the redevelopment of Puxi and urbanization in Pudong clearly denied the innovative agency of the locals.
The image of Shanghai that is presented to the world now is a non-place of consumption or transaction for the global elites. To reboot reinstall the city’s authenticity is not to close down the door and lock the city back in, but to interpret, re-appropriate and integrate outside flows to produce something unique to its own. This is the process we saw in the creation of the hybrid *shikumen* housing nearly a century ago, and the creation of the hybrid Shanghai dialect, which kept updating itself by inventing new vocabulary to capture the zeitgeist — until 2001, when Putonghua started to dominate the city’s linguistic landscape.

In this regard, the preservation of the hybrid Shanghai dialect is key to rescuing the city’s dying authenticity. Over the last two decades, the state’s language policies were accompanied by city-wide urban redevelopment. Under the logic of urban political economy and the real estate market, the Shanghai dialect speech community was dispersed geographically to neighborhoods of mixed-origin residents. Out of practicality, as well as under the influence of the language ideology, most bilingual native Shanghairen opt to speak Putonghua. Nevertheless, it does not mean that they are willing to see the extinction of the dialect, or accede to a Putonghua-monolingual future. Shanghai dialect is an essential part of their Shanghairen identity, as well as their residency in Puxi.

In the next chapter, I will focus on the social integration of non-natives, even though their preference for housing location is opposite to that of native Shanghairen, they are accepted into the natives’ social circles, at least those of middle class background. Since the majority of natives are Putonghua- and Shanghai-dialect bilingual, the language conflicts between the two groups are not issues of communication but battle fields of authentic Shanghairen identity, and hence, rights to the global city.
Chapter 5: Social Integration and a New Shanghairen Identity

In this chapter I examine the emerging patterns of selective social integration of non-natives in Shanghai in the last twelve years after the reforms of the household registration (hukou) system. Since the late 1990s, the loosening of the registration system brought to Shanghai nearly ten million internal migrants, and increased residents in Shanghai to 24 million, according to the 2014 Shanghai Statistic Yearbook. The sixth census conducted in 2010 reveals the composite of the migrant group based on their home origins and educational levels. Among the nine million internal migrants then, only 14.1% have associate degree or above education; in terms of home origins, 79.4% of the nine million are from rural regions. It is the demographic context of my investigation on the class-based social integration of non-natives.

Reforms of the hukou system also granted more and more non-natives Shanghai urban hukou status. With this legal status, non-natives are no longer strictly outsiders (Waidiren), which is a derogatory term in contrast to Shanghairen. After analyzing the gradually increasing social integration of non-natives, I will discuss according to different criteria and cultural authorities who counts as a Shanghairen, and what role the Shanghai dialect plays in the natives’ evaluation of who is qualified for this identity.

The loosening of the hukou system, and especially the reform at the end of 1990s and early 2000s, allowed greater geographical mobility for Chinese citizens, who were then able to move to and settle in more economically developed regions. This measure was applauded by some social scientists and seen as symbolic of the tearing down of the legal and institutional framework maintaining what was called a dual society (Chan, 1994), “apartheid” (Alexander & Chan, 2004) or internal passport system (Chan, Liu & Yang, 1999; Chan & Zhang, 1999:830). Conversely,
other scholars such as Solinger (1995) predicted the persistence of subtle social and cultural barriers; they claimed that the hukou system would continue to shape individuals’ socioeconomic status and life chances (Wu & Treiman, 2004:365). Almost twenty years after the beginning of the reform, my study in Shanghai shows that the effects are more nuanced than predicted in earlier literature. On the one hand, migrants now have better overall chances for structural acceptance and integration as institutional barriers represented by an individual’s hukou status have receded; on the other hand, social and cultural boundaries are effectively maintained through language and lifestyle.

Instead of a dual society characterized by those with an urban hukou and those without, my study suggests that current social stratification in Shanghai is based on a combination of hukou status and socioeconomic status. More specifically, a selection mechanism has been put in place to integrate certain highly educated and wealthy non-natives into the job market and social circles, while less-educated rural migrants are excluded.

Before reforms of the hukou system in the 1990s, three pillars of self-identification firmly established a Shanghairen identity legally, geographically and linguistically: the Shanghai hukou, urban residency and fluency in speaking the Shanghai dialect. Previously these three were inseparable and worked simultaneously; for example, if one was born in Shanghai to Shanghairen parents, legal hukou status was granted automatically. The individual’s hukou would be registered in a household booklet associated with a single urban Shanghai address. These two pillars would have implied the third: fluency in the dialect. Collectively, these affirmed a Shanghairen identity.

However, during the last two decades, state developmental policies aiming to remake Shanghai into a global city have disrupted the legal (hukou) and material (urban housing) basis for determining a local identity, and have diminished the privilege this identity once carried. Such
privilege usually denoted social services enjoyed by native Shanghairen that were granted through their *hukou* status and accessed conveniently in the central urban neighborhoods where they lived. However, as I detailed in chapter four, urban redevelopments and economic reform not only displaced millions of natives from the zone of privilege in the urban center, but also extended Shanghai *hukou* status and its associated privileges to recent migrants.

This increased the significance of the Shanghai dialect in determining a Shanghairen identity. This significance is outside of the realm of legal or socioeconomic status, but derives from habitus. From a Bourdieusian perspective (1996), we can understand the competence of the Shanghai dialect as linguistic habitus, or a dimension of Shanghairen habitus nurtured from decades of institutional privilege. In the early 20th century, the experience of living in a cosmopolitan metropolis transformed the first generation of internal migrants settling in Shanghai, providing their children with unique embodied cultural and social capitals, which were interdependent with the economic capital connected to both urban residence and cultural consumption. After 1949, native Shanghairen enjoyed decades of economic and social privileges granted by the Communist Party’s *hukou* system and the planned economy that favored urban areas. Over generations, this experience influenced Shanghairen’s way of thinking, speaking, and interacting with others.

Moreover, to native Shanghairen, competence in the dialect suggests civility, familiarity with urban living, and Shanghairen group membership. These traits are embodied in the socially constructed disposition of the linguistic habitus, which implies both the “linguistic capacity to generate an infinite number of grammatically correct discourses, and the social capacity to use this competence adequately in a determinate situation (Bourdieu, 1991:37).” Thus competence in the Shanghai dialect serves as an effective barometer for identifying non-natives in every day
interaction. Holding onto this last pillar of Shanghairen identity, older generations use their linguistic habitus to reaffirm that identity, and in the process strengthen the symbolic power of distinction.

**Relative Deprivation of Hukou Privilege**

Chinese urbanites, especially those living in metropolises such as Shanghai, acutely feel the shifting social stratification brought about by the combined forces of economic and *hukou* reforms. I identify a gradual change in social stratification from an urban/rural dichotomy to a three-tiered social hierarchy. Early literature on internal migrants or the so-called “floating population” characterized the group as or rural origin, less educated and of low socioeconomic status. However, my study shows recently more highly educated non-natives settling in Shanghai, and becoming members of the top tier in the new social hierarchy. This leaves less educated migrants at the bottom, working in jobs few native Shanghairen are willing to do, along with marginalized native Shanghairen, who are left behind after three decades of economic reforms and industry restructuring.

**The Issue of Hukou**

The household registration system, or *hukou* system, was implemented in 1958 and categorized all citizens of the People’s Republic of China into two groups. The first classification is the “type” of an individual’s *hukou*, commonly referred to as “agricultural” for residents of rural areas, and “non-agricultural” for urbanites (Chan & Buckingham, 2008:587). An individual’s *hukou* status defines their entitlement to an array of state-provided welfare under the planned economy until the late 1980s (e.g. Cheng & Selden, 1994). The second classification indicates the
location of an individual’s claim to such social resources (Chan & Buckingham, 2008:588; Chan & Zhang, 1999:829; Solinger, 1999). For example, the municipality of Shanghai is only responsible for those with Shanghai hukou. In most cases, the hukou status is associated with one’s birthplace. Thus, in the era before hukou reform, it functioned as an ascribed status and severely limited life chances (Vendryes, 2011:680).

The entitlement to social resources associated with hukou and the disparity of social resources between coastal cities and inland rural regions sharply divided Chinese citizens into two tiers. In the upper tier, urban (non-agricultural) hukou status granted superior economic and social opportunities in contrast to rural (agricultural) hukou status, in terms of education, healthcare, employment and pension. The hukou system “created a chasm in Chinese society and produced and reproduced social segregation and social disparity” (Chan & Zhang, 1999:830).

Changes to the hukou system did not take place in accordance with the economic reform in 1978. As Lu points out, the hukou system was actually enforced more strictly during the first decade of these reforms as a way to monitor population flow and maintain social stability (2002:127). As a result, the divide between urban and rural hukou was deepened. It was not until 1992, when state power related to resource allocation and population mobility control was decentralized, that hukou system reforms in various forms started to emerge in more economically developed coastal regions. This was when Shanghai adopted an investment-based “Blue-Stamp” hukou system to bypass the national hukou system, and grant non-natives’ right to reside in the city (Chan & Zhang, 1999:838-39).

Borrowing Bourdieu’s concept of capital conversion, I argue that the exorbitant fee charged to “Blue-Stamp” hukou applicants and the rigid criteria imposed upon them is a state-initiated conversion of economic capital to socio-political capital objectified in hukou status. The “Blue-
The "Blue-Stamp" hukou system is similar to the employment or investment based immigration visa in the United States, but used internally to differentiate Chinese citizens. Through it, the municipal government of Shanghai recruited desirable non-native talent or entrepreneurs by guaranteeing them privileges that previously were enjoyed exclusively by native Shanghairen. Politically and economically, the non-natives with this “Blue-Stamp” or “achieved” hukou status challenged the natives’ symbolic ownership of the city.

The effects of earlier hukou reforms (1997-2002) are the departure points for my study. National studies conducted shortly after reforms made in the early 2000s show that at that time the hukou system still performed “a crucial role to determine socio-political stability, facilitate a rapid but uneven economic growth, and shape socio-economic stratification and spatial inequality in China” (Wang, 2004:115). I have discovered that Shanghai in early 2010s is transitioning from the hukou-defined dualism into a three-tiered social hierarchy caused by the lingering symbolic capital of hukou status and the increasingly significant urban political economy. A legal status mainly designed for social control in the Maoist era, hukou status is now a highly effective way to mobilize a select labor force and direct investment capital into the most aggressively developing urban areas. The municipal government incentivizes labor and capital movement with access to top quality social services and a modern urban living environment.

I understand the positive results of hukou reforms through the lens of Bryan Turner’s argument about the two dimensions of modern citizenship - social membership and the right to an allocation of resources (1993:2). In terms of social membership, integration has taken place in three dimensions of social life – workplace, social circles, and family – among the highly educated and wealthy non-natives. For rural, less-educated migrant workers, the social exclusion persists. Rural migrant workers, as a group, are not even mentioned when my native Shanghairen
interviewees discuss non-natives’ social integration. As for the allocation of resources, the transition from the state- to market-dominated redistribution of social services promotes the social inclusion of non-natives, especially those with high cultural and economic capital, into comfortable urban living in Shanghai. However, the urban political economy is no less a classification system than the previous *hukou* system; both ultimately cast rural migrants, as well as some native Shanghai residents, to the bottom of the social hierarchy. The urban citizenship in Shanghai thus is enjoyed fully by those of high socioeconomic status with a Shanghai *hukou*, regardless of origin. Native Shanghai residents with *hukou* in general are able to claim their citizenship through the social membership and the remaining power of the *hukou* status. Rural migrants, though provided with a limited amount of social services, remain second-class citizens in Shanghai.

**Selective Acceptance in Workplace**

In the last ten years, acceptance of non-natives into Shanghai’s labor force has shifted away from predominantly manual labor jobs. In the implementation of developmental policies aimed at turning Shanghai into the kind of global city characterized by a strong tertiary sector of the economy and research and development facilities, the municipal government projected that Shanghai would need a labor force of up to 2 million professionals by 2015 (Chen, 2009:xxiii, xxix). Against this backdrop of labor shortage, the retreat of the state’s role in job allocation based on an individual’s *hukou* status, and the decentralization of state power in *hukou* reforms, one group of non-natives in Shanghai enjoy a much better chance for social acceptance and upward social mobility. They are those who have obtained Shanghai urban *hukou* through educational credentials or financial investment (Fan, 2002:103). This suggests a new, and more complex social stratification than the clear-cut polarization of natives versus non-natives (Ren, 2011:173).
Institutional changes of the *hukou* system and changes in the hiring process granted both state-owned and private companies autonomy to move towards more merit-based recruitment. This gave rise to China’s new business elite, who enjoy privileges on par with expats, princelings, or party cadres. These elite can be roughly categorized into two groups. First, the topmost stratum comprised of “foreign-sector managers”—Chinese nationals who manage the foreign-backed businesses that have been allowed to operate in China since the late 1970s. Within this group, there are also professionals and technocratic managers in both foreign and domestic sectors. As a whole, members of the business elite group tend to be young and well educated—in their twenties and thirties at the time of Pearson’s research in the late 1990s. The second stratum of the new business elite is made up of private entrepreneurs. Members of these two groups have gained control of substantial economic resources, leading to higher incomes and a higher standard of living for them and their families (Pearson, 1997:3-7). These new business elite in Shanghai are not necessarily native Shanghairen.

As I described in the introduction, that I interviewed fifty native Shanghairen of a plethora of professions in organizations owned by the state, foreign corporations, or domestic private entrepreneurs. My interviews with native Shanghairen about their non-native bosses and co-workers show that the hiring process in many industries has moved away from a *hukou*-based system, which leads to better chance of upward mobility for highly educated non-natives in Shanghai.

Kerry, a native Shanghairen holding an Australian passport and a bachelor’s degree from the University of New South Wales in Sydney, has worked at HSBC’s headquarters Shanghai for ten years. She told me about their new recruits, who are mostly non-natives:
They are mostly with a graduate degree from top universities such as Tsinghua University or Peking University.40 In big companies like ours, they are entitled to the same benefits as native Shanghairen. They occupy relatively high-up positions. Evidently, non-natives with educational credentials from top domestic universities fare well in banking, and appear to be just as good, if not better than, native Shanghairen in the eyes of foreign banks.

These educational credentials are also favorably recognized in the previously highly exclusive, state-controlled sectors, such as mass media. A native Shanghairen journalist who works for Xinmin Evening News describes the careerism among new non-native hires since 2000:

They [non-natives] are very good at earning high scores at university entrance exams [which determine one’s major such as the highly sought-after Journalism], which means most [new recruits] since 2000 are not [native] Shanghairen. Instinctively they want to integrate into Shanghai society, so they work really hard. They work overtime a lot and seek quick promotions…Now all the mid-level managerial positions in our newspaper are held by non-natives.

We see a clear career trajectory of those non-natives trying to make it in the newspaper business in Shanghai. Beginning in high school, non-natives originating from less developed inland regions aim to earn a diploma from a top domestic university based on standardized test scores. After obtaining that degree, they compete with natives to earn a highly sought-after position as a journalist. To natives such as the one I interviewed, this position is a good and comfortable career destination; however, in the example of the Xinmin Evening News, for non-natives, it is merely a start. For a better and more secure future in Shanghai, they continue to push themselves further to acquire managerial and editorial positions.

In this case, both recruitment and internal promotion appear to be merit-based, or at least they seem to be dissociated from one’s Shanghai hukou status. Although there is no way for us to know whether non-natives are more qualified than their native Shanghairen counterparts in the

40 These are the top two universities in China, according to U.S. News’ Best Global Universities in China list. http://www.usnews.com/education/best-global-universities/china
news paper’s hiring and internal promotion process, my interviewee appears embittered and expresses a sense of relative deprivation of privilege once granted by *hukou*.

Another sector that has experienced this shift in recruitment practice is the once rigidly *hukou*-based top-tier public schools. David Chen, a current sophomore at China’s third-ranked university, Fudan University, and graduate of the affiliated high school, reflects on his experience with his high school science teachers:

> None of my high school teachers are [native] Shanghairen. Not to mention Shanghai dialect, they don’t even speak proper Putonghua! Some of them have such a heavy accent, for example, my math teacher is from Henan Province and holds a master degree from Fudan University. It took my classmates and me a good month to distinguish “suo yi shuo” [so to say/therefore] and “shuo yi shuo” [let’s say] in his lectures.

When I express my surprise about the inadequacy of his former teacher’s Putonghua fluency, since there is a mandatory language test for a teaching certificate, David stresses that in terms of academic credentials, his math teacher is of the top rank, so language skills could be overlooked in the hiring process. This example shows the emphasis on merit, that besides the applicant’s *hukou* status, national standard language requirements can be ignored in the hiring process as well.

The example of the math teacher also shows that a grey area exists in Shanghai’s job market. Instead of automatically excluding people without a Shanghai *hukou*, employers have the flexibility to bypass national or municipal regulations in their pursuit of recruiting the best and brightest in the country. The existence of this grey area is likely due to the labor shortage in Shanghai’s fast development, especially at the professional level. Nurse Le, who works in the Pediatric Hematology and Oncology Department at the Shanghai Children’s Medical Center, explains the high percentage of non-native doctors employed there:

> The chance for native Shanghairen medical school fresh graduates to obtain a job
in Triple A [san jia] top-rank hospitals\textsuperscript{41} such as ours is slim because we want to recruit those with more experiences or having studied abroad [regardless of hukou]. I can safely say in Triple A hospitals in general, non-natives account for 70 percent among medical doctors.

The competitive job market at the children’s medical center is another example of how little \textit{hukou} status matters. The above cases in media, the public school system, and in hospitals demonstrate that in Shanghai today, with the institutional barrier in the hiring process eliminated, highly educated and hardworking non-natives are enjoying a better chance of integration at workplace and upward social mobility.

So far we have seen the increasing social integration in the reform era Shanghai job market, resulting from both the foreign and once state-controlled sectors recruiting based on merit instead of \textit{hukou} status, party membership, or any other pre-reform criteria. The private sector in Shanghai, reborn in the economic reform era in the early 1980s, has also experienced an influx of non-natives’ participation. Yingli who works as a sales aide, though not mentioning the \textit{hukou} status of her bosses, recounts their origins:

The company I work for sells machines. The head of our sales department is from Zhejiang Province. The big boss of the company is her uncle twice removed, and her husband, also a non-native, has his own business. They are senior level white collars, if not higher.

In her eyes, her bosses, being non-natives, are doing much better than native Shanghairen like herself. Better-off are also her non-native co-workers:

Our sales representatives need to have an engineering background and willingness to travel. They are earning good money. With their high commission rate, they were all able to purchase housing in Shanghai. They married in Shanghai, and now have children. Really, they are better off than us. Look at their nice cars!

Yingli again does not mention her colleagues’ \textit{hukou} status. In her opinion, \textit{hukou} is irrelevant to one’s socioeconomic status and material success. Being a native Shanghairen, Yingli seems to be

\textsuperscript{41} It is the top rank of hospitals in China, according to the ranking system developed by the State Council. For a total registered long-term population of 25 million, there are only 35 triple A hospitals including specialist ones.
pleased with her office job because without any engineering background, she does not see herself as a successful sales representative in the company. Instead devoting more time to her young daughter, she understands that hard work and technical knowledge are the reasons for her non-native colleagues’ higher socioeconomic status.

The shift from hiring practices based on hukou or other ascribed status, such as family political background, to a merit-based job market has contributed to Shanghai’s prosperity and development into a global city. At the same time, those new business elites’ participation in Shanghai’s economic expansion has been rewarded with considerable prestige (Pearson, 1997:7). Moreover, their educational credentials, higher positions and income level pave the way to easily acquire an urban hukou, for example through Shanghai’s “Blue Stamp” hukou system. We can consider them as new elite members of a privileged local community in global cities.

In the low-end job markets, employers use the same flexibility granted by hukou reforms to take advantage of rural migrant workers’ geographical mobility. Equally essential for Shanghai’s development is the participation of less-educated non-natives employed in low-status jobs.

Non-natives in Low-end Workplace

Studies in the 1990s and early 2000s show large-scale lay-offs (xiagang) due to structural changes of state-owned enterprises in urban China “through consolidation, mergers and relocations” (Chen, 2009: xxiii). As a result, hundreds of thousands of native Shanghairen were pushed into early-retirement and low-status jobs in the service sector. Drawing data from Shanghai’s Statistic Yearbooks, Davis finds that from 1990 to 1995, more than 600,000 industrial jobs disappeared - 510,000 of which were in production (1999:33). At that time, China's major urban centers like Shanghai focused on recruiting highly educated labor for the newly rising sectors, as well as
attracting the super-rich (Wang, 2004:120). Thus, workers laid off from manufacturing jobs found opportunity in the service sector. Starting in the early 2000s, when those laid-off workers who moved to service jobs began to retire, and Shanghai was experiencing massive urban redevelopments to achieve a global-city look, it was more and more common to see rural migrant workers in trade, restaurant services, manufacturing and construction (Feng, Zuo & Ruan, 2002:529).

Ten years after those earlier studies, occupational segregation continued, with less-educated rural migrants clustered in low-end jobs. Data from 2013 is represented below in Figure 5.1, drawn from a report published by the Shanghai Statistical Bureau titled “Non-Shanghai Hukou holders count more than half of Shanghai’s labor force”. The areas listed, manufacturing, construction, hospitality and restaurants, and repair and other services have more non-native than native workers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Manufacturing</th>
<th>Construction</th>
<th>Hospitality and Restaurant</th>
<th>Repair and other services</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-native Labor Force</td>
<td>1,486,700</td>
<td>608,700</td>
<td>172,922*</td>
<td>37,785*</td>
<td>3,328,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entire Labor Force</td>
<td>2,524,700</td>
<td>912,594*</td>
<td>296,100</td>
<td>64,700</td>
<td>6,500,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native’s percentage</td>
<td>58.9%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.1 Non-native’s participation in four industries and in Shanghai’s whole labor force. The three statistics with asterisks are not directly provided in the report, but calculated by the author based on statistics in the report.

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My observations of staff at stores, restaurants, barbershops, and other retail or hospitality settings of the staff support those statistics, that the language I overheard was predominantly Putonghua with accent of other dialects. When I inquired about where they would usually encounter non-natives outside of their own office workplace, or immediate social circle, interviewees pointed to low-status service jobs in restaurants, supermarkets, or as janitors and couriers. To help me understand the prevalence of rural migrant workers occupying those jobs, Jianyuan, a retired native Shanghairen, described to me his grocery shopping routine:

That’s why during the Spring Festival [week-long Chinese New Year holiday], we have nowhere to buy fresh groceries in the wet market [fresh food market with individual vendors]! They [rural migrants] all go back home. This is the [only] time that I use my fridge. Usually I buy fresh veggies and meat daily from the wet market across the street.

He regards the lack of fresh ingredients from non-native vendors at the wet market as an inconvenience during the Chinese New Year holiday. At the same time, it shows how the labor force of the wet market is comprised entirely of non-native rural migrant workers. Their annual absence during the New Year holiday brings the whole market to a halt.

Another industry that continues to be dominated by rural migrant workers is construction. As indicated in Figure 5.1, 66.7% of the labor force are non-natives. Zhenhai, who works as a project manager at Shanghai Construction Group tells me about the hierarchy that characterizes their labor force:

Those senior architects or technicians are mostly [native] Shanghairen; many of our internal project meetings are conducted in Shanghai dialect. Since now we do more management than actual construction, we don’t directly hire laborers, but outsource the job to contractors. They are all non-natives, some from Sichuan province, and some from Hunan province. Below them, those laborers are from everywhere!

In the construction industry, according to Zhenhai, native status still corresponds with seniority and expertise, unlike in other sectors that allow non-native college graduates to climb quickly. Almost twenty years ago Chan argued that “state construction enterprises hire many peasant
laborers, in the form of ‘contract workers’ and ‘temporary workers’ to fill strenuous manual and low-skilled jobs shunned by urban labor” (1996:144). This corresponds with my data and with observations made by Feng, Zuo, and Ruan in the early 2000s (2002:530).

The part of hukou reforms most relevant to rural migrant workers is access to manual labor jobs in urban areas. The results of reform are twofold. On the one hand, the urban government allows rural migrants to set up small businesses such as shoe-repair shops, barbershops, tailor shops, grocery stores, and restaurants (Wu & Xie, 2003) for which there are unmet needs in urban centers (Solinger, 1999:14). On the other hand the growing market sector demands more unskilled labor, beyond what the native population is willing or able to supply (Wu & Treiman, 2004:365). Therefore, thanks to hukou reforms, rural migrant workers are geographically mobile and able to fill the labor force voids in Shanghai. They are also now entitled to social services such as healthcare and education for their children, which is available after establishing residency in Shanghai through a non-job-associated Shanghai Residence Permit, as I have explained in chapter two. 43

Regardless of the mobility and opportunities on the job market provided to non-natives, the hukou system remains intact as a major divide between the rural and urban populations, such as Chan and Buckingham observed in the mid-2000s (2008:582). Loosening restrictions to facilitate the flow of capital and labor does not shake the dual citizenship structure, although it does open up space for a select few non-natives to acquire Shanghai urban hukou status. In the mid-1990s, Chan argued that “the opportunity structure of today for most of these migrants still bears heavily the stamp of social stratification forged over decades by the orthodox communist

system” (1996:146). Rural migrant laborers, in other words, were still far from being integrated into urban Chinese societies (Feng, Zuo & Ruan, 2002:539). Ten years later, in the early 2010s, the situation remains the same. A third aspect of the changing social hierarchy in Shanghai is the downward mobility of a group of native Shanghairen, who saw their *hukou*-associated privilege slip away in the economic reform era.

The Native Shanghairen Left Behind

The reforms of state-owned enterprises (work-unit, *danwei*) in the 1990s shattered state-guaranteed employment security and laid-off hundreds of thousands of native Shanghairen. These structural changes left those laid-off from the textile industry, for example, without the skills to gain employment in the booming commerce, banking and insurance tertiary sectors. As the new economic elites ascended to power, the disadvantaged—the urban unemployed and pensioners in particular—drifted to the margins of China’s efforts to mold Shanghai into a global city (Ren, 2011:176; Zhang, 2000: 24-39).

To understand how badly native Shanghairen pensioners fare, I collected information from my middle-age interviewees about their parents. One interview subject, Ouyang, shares his mother’s feeling of systemic unfairness:

My mother is a retired high school teacher. Her pension is much lower than those of her position retired in the [adjacent] Jiangsu or Zhejiang province. And if you add the high living cost in Shanghai on top of it…

The financial hardship for pensioners is not limited to retired schoolteachers. Since the calculation of the pension is based on one’s pre-retirement salary, seniority and type of workplace, whether with a foreign company, a state-owned enterprise or organization, or a collective, makes a significant difference in the pension an individual is entitled to. According to documents published by the Shanghai Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau, the monthly minimum
pension is RMB 1,500 (approx. US $250) for 2013, the year of my fieldwork. At the beginning of 2013, the bureau announced that pensioners city-wide would receive a RMB 140 (approx. US $23) raise, and an additional RMB 3 (approx. US $.50) for each year an individual has paid into social security; and lastly a 3% increase of the monthly pension.\textsuperscript{44} That meager raise was intended to compensate for the inflation rate. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the Consumer Price Index in 2013 was 2.5\%.\textsuperscript{45}

Against this backdrop, we can understand Ouyang’s dissatisfaction in the financial condition his mother and other native Shanghairen pensioners are left in:

There are many elderly women like my mother who receives about two thousand yuan per month (approx. US $325). Their lives are bitter and difficult. They haven’t benefitted from the urban growth, instead they shrunk lower, and marginalized. They are quasi-paupers now. They are just above the migrant workers selling manual labor.

If we take RMB 2,000 as his mother’s base pension, add the RMB 140 representing the 3% increase, and assume she contributed to social security for 20 years since the beginning of that system, a quick calculation shows the increase will bring his mother’s 2013 monthly and annual pension to RMB 2,260 and RMB 27,120, respectively. Considering the per capita disposable income for urban Shanghairen in 2013 was RMB 43,851,\textsuperscript{46} it was no exaggeration when Ouyang described his mother’s financial standing as “quasi-pauper”, whose entire pension is only 62% of the per capita disposable income. On the socioeconomic hierarchy, these pensioners are closer to the migrant manual laborers than to their fellow natives.


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The deepening of economic reforms drastically reduced employment opportunities and state-subsidized welfare for urban *hukou* holders (Chan & Zhang, 1999:842). The political and structural framework of the country’s transition to a market economy, or quoting David Harvey, “neoliberalism with Chinese characters” (2005:120), has created a group of disadvantaged native Shanghairen, who, though they contributed to building a “New China (*xin zhongguo*)” under Mao for decades, were left behind to fend for themselves in the economic reform era.

**Social Circles**

In a period of large-scale influx of internal migrants, achieving full-scale social integration of the newcomers into the native Shanghairen’s social life within less than twenty years’ is likely to be wishful thinking. Indeed, while most of my fifty interviewees reflect that they have more and more non-native friends, acquired through school or work, lack of integration persists.

Among the younger generations, those who grew up in the late 1980s and especially those in the early 2000s, when the presence of highly educated non-natives was common in schools and workplaces, I find a general trend of friendship based on shared lifestyle and experience. *Hukou* status and Shanghai dialect competence appear to matter little. For example, David Chen, a native Shanghairen born in 1996 studying at Fudan University explained to me his circle of friends:

> As long as they share with me experience and memories, I will make friends with them. I have a good friend since high school, who is a non-native and doesn’t speak the Shanghai dialect. We play soccer together and are now enrolled in the same university. Since his non-native friend attended the same high school, which is a top rank public high school affiliated with Fudan University, I can safely predict that the friend’s parents belong to the group of state-sponsored non-natives, who are either highly educated or wealthy and have acquired Shanghai *hukou*. Only with that status can non-natives send their children to public high schools,
since it is beyond the free nine-year mandatory education that the state requires local governments to provide for internal migrants, regardless of their hukou status. Therefore, I understand the friendship between David Chen and his non-native good friend as based on habitus: the similar socioeconomic status of their families, and their shared interest in sports.

Beyond the school setting, David gives me examples of other types of shared experience, which to him, would foster friendships: “same experience, you know, colleagues, neighbors or you travel together.” Taking into consideration the role of the urban political economy in sorting residents over the last two decades of urban redevelopment and relocation, I understand David’s friendship circle as based on household income, which is represented by the housing location and consumption patterns including vacation destinations. 47 It is the working of Bourdieusian habitus that converts economic capital into cultural and social capitals.

Another interviewee, Jenny, is more than fifteen years David’s senior. She worked for the Bank of East Asia and was enrolled in an MBA program at the China Europe International Business School 48 at the time of the interview. She regards those only making friends with native Shanghaiiren narrow-minded:

I don’t mind making friends with non-natives. We are all Chinese, as long as you are a nice person [then we can be friends]. I am enrolled in an MBA program, and many of my classmates are non-natives. They are all brilliant people. I am not that kind of narrow-minded people who only make friends with [native] Shanghaiiren.

The non-natives in her narrative are certainly highly educated, and belong to upper-middle if not upper class. The similar socioeconomic background and shared graduate school experience, which includes a half year study in Paris and traveling around Europe together, brought Jenny and her

47 Though I argue the preference of native Shanghaiiren for housing in Puxi, and non-natives for that in Pudong in the previous chapter, it does not alter the fact that housing price sorts residents of different socioeconomic status into different neighborhoods.
48 China Europe International Business School is ranked No.1 in Asia and No.17 in the world for its full-time MBA program by Bloomberg Businessweek for 2014.
non-native classmates together. The exclusiveness of her friendship circle is not based on *hukou* status or birthplace, but habitus visible through socioeconomic status and consumption patterns.

From David, we gain a glimpse of the opinion of the college age future elite native Shanghairen, and from Jenny, of the group that occupies the top stratum in the socioeconomic hierarchy. Lu Yan, a private elementary school teacher in her early 40s, who grew up in a working class neighborhood in the northeast of Shanghai, adds her understanding of the change in native Shanghairen’s social circles, “there are more and more non-natives living in Shanghai. About half of my friends now are non-natives.” She regarded this transition as an inevitable consequence of demographic changes in the city in the last two decades, rather than describing it as an issue of class, shared exclusive experience or compatible habitus. Her experience echoes that of most of my other interviewees.

Though the majority of my interviewees describe their social circles as integrated between natives and non-natives, I still characterize this pattern as transitional because of the persistence of segregation. At a time when more and more natives were making friends with non-native co-workers or their children’s non-native classmates’ parents, the scene at a research institute housed in the Shanghai Normal University suggested persistent boundaries, such as native Shanghairen Chen Ji observes:

Those just relocated to Shanghai for work, are very eager to make friends through the Internet. As soon as they find someone [via Internet] from the same hometown, they would call each other every day and have meals every day! I couldn’t imagine doing something like that with anyone except for one’s boyfriend or husband. As someone who was born, grew up and has lived in Shanghai all her life, Chen Ji could not understand the kind of friendship that develops between recent migrants solely based on shared home origins:
How could you call those friends? You just have meals together, without any [emphasis added by the interviewee] connection or understanding at a deeper level. Maybe it is because they are lonely.

What Chen Ji attributed to loneliness, I understand to be a product of the social exclusion non-natives face in the city. In an effort to build their own social circle outside of the native Shanghaiiren community, they seek people from their own hometown, which results in these regional-identity based social circles.

From Chen Ji’s further elaboration of the formation of her non-native colleague’s social circle, I learn about mutual exclusion:

All of his friends share a similar experience with him. They originate from [less developed] inland provinces, having studied abroad, and now come to Shanghai to work. And the other kind is purely home region based network, such as from Anhui [province] or from Hubei [province]. They don’t usually hang out with [us] Shanghaiiren.

Chen Ji’s non-native colleagues did not share similar experience with her, unlike those teenage children of the first-generation non-native Shanghaiiren David went to high school with. In Chen Ji’s eyes, the social circle non-natives cultivate is intentionally with other non-natives. This demonstrates how social exclusion between native and non-native Shanghaiiren is maintained from both sides.

What Chen Ji described in the academic setting bears similarity with the segregated social circle in the HSBC Headquarters Kerry worked for. Given foreign enterprises’ tendency to hire directly from top Chinese universities, enabled by the reformed hukou system which facilitated the geographical mobility of highly qualified talent, many interviewees working at Fortune 500 companies in Shanghai describe to me the mixed origin workforce in their offices. However, meritocratic hiring processes do not necessarily mean a full integration at the social level. As Kerry described:

It is fairly segregated in my office. Outside of the native Shanghaiiren circle, there is the waidiren [non-natives] never been abroad, and waidiren having studied
overseas, and the third “non-native” group is 100% foreigners. They don’t hang out across the lines.

Kerry’s observation illustrates that in a foreign bank, the social circles are the same as those in a research institute housed on a state-owned university campus.

Therefore, in the cosmopolitan Shanghai, home origin, educational background, overseas experience and Chinese citizenship\(^{49}\) all serve as barriers to form inclusive social networks. Likewise, in Beijing, not only are low-wage migrant workers discriminated against, but also those with a relatively high income suffer from discrimination in terms of the difficulty to make friends with natives (Zhan, 2011:264). With the diminishing relevance of \textit{hukou}, shared socioeconomic status brings more social integration between natives and non-natives. However, lifestyle, home origin and life experience, which are manifestations of habitus, continue to maintain and reproduce mutual exclusion.

\textit{Family}

Transitions taking place in native Shanghairen’s social circles run parallel to recent changes in marriage patterns. A quick tally of the marriage status of my fifty interviewees shows that in comparison to the generation in their 50s and 60s, the generation in their 30s shows higher incidence of marriage between Shanghairen and non-natives.\(^{50}\) Though five of my interviewees are still in college and below the legal marriage age\(^{51}\) and eight are in their 30s to 40s but still single, of the remaining thirty-seven interviewees, 60% are married to native Shanghairen. Among those twenty-two married to peer natives, six are fifty-five years old and above. That is to say,

\(^{49}\) Since P.R. China does not allow dual citizenship, it is very rare for a foreigner to adopt Chinese citizenship.

\(^{50}\) Data from the Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau show that the average age of first marriage is 30.2 and 28.2 years old for male and female respectively in 2013 (Chen, 2015) so I use the age of 30 to group my interviewees in the analysis of the marriage pattern.

\(^{51}\) According to the People’s Republic of China Marriage Law, the legal marriage age for male is 22, and female 20.
from my non-representative sample, sixteen native Shanghairen in their 30s to 40s are married to natives, while fifteen to non-natives. Marriage status was not one of the criteria of my research subject recruitment, but I believe the snapshot it provides can supplement the data from the Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau, where marriage licenses are issued. Of the 147,820 couples married in 2013, 55,373 are of unions between a native Shanghairen and a non-native, accounting for more than 37 percent. According to a report in the *Xinmin Evening News* on February 28th, 2014 titled “Shanghai has the highest percentage of native and non-native unions across the country with men’s average first marriage age at 34,” the intermarriage rate in 2013 was 10% higher than it was in 2012.52

We can interpret the increasing rate of intermarriage between native and non-natives as a deepening of social integration. Furthermore, unions of this kind will lead to the decline of prejudice against non-native in the future. Yujie told me about her changes in opinion after marrying a non-native, who was a graduate school classmate of hers, and originated from the neighboring Zhejiang province:

Years ago I would comment on some uncivilized behavior of a native Shanghairen by saying something like, “What the hell, are you a Waidiren [non-native]?” I wouldn’t say it now. It used to be very common that whenever something uncivilized, or bizarre happened, native Shanghairen would attribute it to Waidiren. It’s very likely that because my husband is a Waidiren, my opinion has changed, and also I am more open to people from elsewhere in general.

Yujie’s self-reflection illustrates how years of college and office life, living and working side by side with non-natives, and later marriage to a non-native, have changed her attitude towards non-natives as a group.

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However, this does not necessarily translate to the elimination of prejudice outside of the home. Yin, a native Shanghairen, who has worked her entire professional life in a highly state-controlled performing arts institute that once followed a rigid hukou-based hiring process, told me about her observation of native/non-native intermarriages:

It is very common to see inter-marriage, for example a few of my best female friends married non-natives. And they [need to] speak Putonghua at home. Sometimes when we have a dinner party, I need to converse with them in Putonghua, otherwise their husbands couldn’t understand.

This quote exemplifies the ripple effect that makes social interaction and integration of non-natives go beyond the individual household into the larger native Shanghairen community. The effects of this integration of social circles are double-edged, however: on the one hand it increases non-natives’ social integration generally, making Shanghairen more open-minded about non-natives. On the other hand, this example points out a resulting linguistic isolation; communication in monolingual Putonghua Mandarin to accommodate non-native’s unfamiliarity with Shanghai dialect reinforces an outsider identity.

Furthermore, the insider/outsider contrast can potentially increase prejudice, as Yin continued her comment on the intermarriage phenomenon:

As far as I know, most intermarried couples lived/moved into the native Shanghairen’s home. That’s why I always say the intention of non-natives marrying native Shanghairen is suspicious. Those closely involved cannot see as clearly as those outside {she chuckled} …

These comments should be understood in the context of the practice of state-owned housing being provided by work units to their Shanghai urban hukou holder employees in the pre-economic reform era, and later those units were sold at a heavily subsidized rate to sitting tenants. Taking into consideration the current housing situation in Shanghai as well, where prices are skyrocketing, Yin suspects non-natives’ intent to marry native Shanghairen to be motivated more by material considerations, such as the availability of free or cheap housing, than by love.
The transition to a more integrated Shanghai in terms of employment, social circle, and marriage patterns has altered the social hierarchy significantly. Once a crucial criterion for defining who is a Shanghairen, the Shanghai urban *hukou* has diminished significance. In its place, individual’s socioeconomic status plays an ever more important role for prestige and entitlement. In this vein, a common theme emerges again and again during interviews with native Shanghairen. They assess the status of non-natives based on two new criteria—housing and Shanghai dialect competence. The first criterion is a direct representation of one’s financial strength, and the other is the non-native’s willingness to assimilate by learning the Shanghai dialect.

The integration of non-natives into the native Shanghairen community, though mostly class-based, leads to the decline of the exclusive linguistic space of the Shanghai dialect. Bilingual native Shanghairen tend to switch to speaking Putonghua whenever a non-native is present. However, this does not mean that Shanghai dialect has lost its significance for Shanghairen identity and its symbolic capital of distinction. As Woolard observes in the linguistic accommodation practiced by bilingual Catalonians in Barcelona to Castilian-speaking migrants, the code-switch means “the denial of access to the full membership in the solidary local group; those cannot who penetrate the language barrier cannot penetrate group boundaries” (1989:82).

With a growing population of non-speakers, the dialect emerges as a tool used by natives to evaluate non-natives’ cultural assimilation, hence it is the second criterion I identify in the native Shanghairen’s acceptance of non-natives. Zhan (2011:260-61) concludes from her study of inner Mongolian migrants’ social integration in Beijing that the separation of social circles and identity-based exclusion are the two mechanisms used to maintain social boundaries. I argue that the two criteria in my study, housing location and the Shanghai dialect competence, provide a similar exclusive function. Native Shanghairen use these two as manifestations of habitus to judge and
evaluate non-natives, whether they can be recognized as true Shanghairen. In the next section, I will explore the officially endorsed category of New Shanghairen, and its connection to Shanghai dialect competence.

*Who is a (New) Shanghairen?*

In the same period that the Shanghai *hukou* lost its aura of exclusiveness, a new category, New Shanghairen, was invented and endorsed by the Shanghai Municipal Government. It is used in government documents and the state-controlled mass media to differentiate the highly educated, Shanghai *hukou* holding non-natives from their poor and less-educated counterparts. From a Bourdusian perspective, struggles over regional identity, which is linked with birthplace and its associated durable marks such as language or dialect, is a struggle over classifications, and over the power to legitimate grouping and ungrouping (1991:221). Official categories notwithstanding, native Shanghairen evaluate non-natives’ level of assimilation through their Shanghai dialect competence. Based on data I have collected through social media and in-depth interviews, a near consensus of native Shanghairen feel that the Shanghai dialect is an essential part of local identity, and that if non-natives want to become authentic Shanghairen, not merely on paper—either through *hukou* status or by other government policy—then they must learn the dialect.

In this process of classification, millions of rural-origin migrant workers are excluded due to their lack of state sponsorship and legal claim to the city represented by a Shanghai *hukou*. Many of them are street vendors, barbers, locksmiths, or seamstresses (e.g. the seamstress who speaks fluent Shanghai dialect whom I described in chapter three), who rely heavily on neighborhood

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53 The first official mention of the category New Shanghairen is the December 13th, 2001 Issue of the People’s Daily – Oversea version, citing then Municipal Communist Party Secretary of Shanghai, Huang Ju (Chen & Ye, 2001).
business and thus have economic incentive to learn Shanghai dialect. Indeed, many of them have obtained working knowledge of Shanghai dialect and are able to conduct simple conversations with native Shanghairen customers. However, because of their lack of a Shanghai *hukou* and their low socioeconomic status, they are not included in the New Shanghairen category in either the official rhetoric or native Shanghairen’s perceptions. On the contrary, the highly educated New Shanghairen, in general, do not care much about Shanghai dialect competence, since they have been officially granted local legal status, in additional to socioeconomic right to the city.

**Shanghai Dialect**

Earlier studies, such as John Gumperz and Jenny Cook-Gumperz’s, highlight that group members’ common interests must be based on shared culture (1982:5-6), which does not necessarily rely on residence in close proximity or being socioeconomically homogenous. Shanghairen identity now relies to a great extent on a shared linguistic culture, beyond residence and socioeconomic status. In the last chapter I showed that more than one million native Shanghairen households have been displaced and relocated over the last two decades of urban redevelopment, and in the first half of this chapter, we saw that a new stratum of urban poor is growing among elderly native Shanghairen. Also important to remember is the fact that those who identify as “native Shanghairen” are themselves second or third generation migrants from other parts of the country. Thus local rootedness is less relevant to the social identity of Shanghairen than language and shared values.

Language has historically played an important role in social exclusion and discrimination in Shanghai. Honig notes the prejudice held against the Subei people in Shanghai, who were impoverished refugees fleeing war and famine north of the Yangtze River in the early 20th century (1992). Though low socioeconomic status and poor education were the basis of discrimination,
their distinctive accent when speaking the Shanghai dialect singled them out and resulted in social exclusion. The status of a language is closely related to the status of its speakers. Dorian argues that if the people who speak a language have little power and low prestige, their language is unlikely to be well thought of (1999:3-4). The discrimination against the Subei people, then, can be viewed through this lens, that their accent in speaking the Shanghai dialect suggested unfamiliarity with Shanghai’s urban lifestyle and hence their lower social status.

However, in contrast to the Subei people, more recent migrants in Shanghai are not uniform: neither arriving from a particular region nor occupying the bottom of the social hierarchy. Many who have acquired Shanghai hukou through academic credentials or wealth occupy a higher socioeconomic status than many native Shanghai residents. The fact that the native Shanghairen group is not socioeconomically homogeneous adds another layer to the nuanced and ambivalent relationship between speakers’ social position and their languages.

The association between Shanghai dialect and Shanghairen identity is created and maintained against the backdrop of the dominant language ideology. That is, despite the lower status of the Shanghai dialect when compared to Putonghua Mandarin, the local dialect is still able to assert symbolic power of prestige and exclusivity owing to its long history as the lingua franca of a cosmopolitan metropolis.

Expansion of the definition of Shanghairen or invention of categories to characterize non-native residents in the city started before the officially endorsed term “New Shanghairen.” As Rudolph and Lu discovered in late 2000s, some non-natives, who quickly adapted to the city, “modestly called themselves ‘quasi Shanghainese’” (2008:172). But, as my research demonstrates, native Shanghairen usually dismiss the self-identification of non-natives. These same Shanghairen dismiss the official category as well, by stressing that their parents or grandparents are migrants to
Shanghai. By tacitly invoking their family’s migration history, they stress the voluntary cultural identification among the earlier generation. This locates Shanghairen identity not in *hukou* status, residency, or dialect, but behaviors that combine all three, a purposeful adherence to cultural signifiers, which these Shanghairen do not see practiced by many recent migrants.

Native Shanghai residents who hold a personal stake in preserving the Shanghai dialect often express a strong association between Shanghairen identity and dialect competence. Qian Chen, a famous Huaji Xi (Shanghai dialect theater) performer in his early 50s and the vice president of the Shanghai Huaji Xi Troupe, spoke fervently about the voluntary cultural assimilation of earlier migrants such as his family when I asked about the concept of Shanghairen in relation to the recent waves of internal migrants to Shanghai:

"We are not true Shanghairnese either! Indeed I was born in Shanghai, but my parents and my paternal grandparents came from the adjacent Zhejiang Province. We have undergone the transition from New Shanghairen to Old Shanghairen. It is the same."

He pointed out that since his parents and grandparents assimilated to Shanghai’s urban culture through practicing Shanghai dialect more than fifty years ago, recent migrants should do likewise. After all, he implies, the migration story is the same. In his formulation, new migrants who are unwilling to learn and speak the Shanghai dialect cannot qualify as Shanghairen.

For motivation to learn the dialect, Qian focuses on love or emotional attachment to the city, rather than the pragmatism among the earlier migrants who acquired the local dialect to get by or to find work. According to Qian, adoption of the Shanghai dialect is both a demonstration and a requirement of a Shanghairen identity: “Being a Shanghairen, you should love your city, and love your mother tongue!” In his opinion, to be recognized as Shanghairen, newcomers need to shed their hometown affiliations and wholeheartedly embrace the dialect. Otherwise, one does not truly belong.
To some, the significance of Shanghai dialect competence is so paramount that they completely reject the official New Shanghairen category. Wu Wei, a native Shanghairen, is dialect preservation activist in his early 30s who developed a mobile app for typing Shanghai dialect. He says of the importance of dialect to true Shanghairen identity:

First and foremost, if that person doesn’t know how to speak the Shanghai dialect, s/he is not a Shanghairen, regardless of the “new” prefix, or hukou. His assertion places the Shanghai dialect competence above the hukou status, and likely also above the newcomers’ long-term residency in Shanghai, and even socioeconomic status. To him, linguistic competence is the sole determinant of a Shanghairen identity.

Ordinary Shanghai residents view the connection between Shanghairen identity and Shanghai dialect competence with more nuance than preservation activists. Zhejun, 34, a native Shanghairen assistant professor in computer graphic design, explained:

Firstly, whoever can speak the Shanghai dialect is definitely a Shanghairen. I mean whoever can speak accent-free Shanghai dialect, you can identify that person as a true Shanghairen.

In his opinion, Shanghai dialect competence satisfies a necessary and sufficient condition to qualify for Shanghairen identity. However, Shanghairen identity under certain conditions, can be extended to non-speakers:

However, it is not necessarily true that those unable to speak the dialect are Waidiren (non-natives). Many people have relocated to Shanghai. For years, they did not feel like learning to speak the Shanghai dialect. They don’t think it is necessary since everyone around them speaks Putonghua. Also, they do not necessarily want to integrate into Shanghai’s alleyway vernacular culture. I regard those with Shanghai hukou, living in Shanghai for years and with no intention for leaving Shanghai as Shanghairen.

The three criteria of a Shanghairen identity he acknowledges are legal status, length of residency, and the intention and financial capacity to stay. He also narrowly associates Shanghai dialect with the alleyway-living lifestyle that characterized the majority of working-class Shanghai for most of
the 20th century. At a deeper level, Liu admits that dialect competence persists as a barrier for non-natives to be accepted into the Shanghairen community:

But, at the level of acceptance, I only recognize those able to speak the Shanghai dialect. I would regard them as a Shanghairen from head to toe. Otherwise, the recognition stops at the surface. In the Shanghairen circle, if you speak Putonghua, it would still be very difficult, if not impossible, for us to accept you as a Shanghairen.

Criteria at the institutional level might guarantee Shanghairen identity in terms of material claims to residency, but to be accepted as an insider by native Shanghairen is a different issue, for which the Shanghai dialect competence is the ultimate determinant.

Regardless of any ambition to be recognized as a true Shanghairen, the efforts non-natives put into learning and practicing Shanghai dialect are usually seen in a favorable light by my native Shanghairen interviewees. They usually acknowledge the socioeconomic status and hukou-based distinction within migrant groups, and take non-natives’ willingness to learn the dialect as a sufficient indicator of cultural assimilation. Chengyu, the manager of the customer service department in the Shanghai Grand Theatre, who employees are predominantly native Shanghairen, explains to me his understanding of the category of New Shanghairen:

New Shanghairen is non-natives with Shanghai hukou. They are “imported” professional talent, unlike migrant workers, who hold only residence permit. The categories are different.

Interestingly, right after explaining the categorical difference, Chengyu gives me an example of successful cultural assimilation without mentioning hukou status:

A manager in our security department is from Shandong province. He speaks very good Shanghai dialect, and well integrated into our society. However, his level of fluency is rare.

Chengyu directly indicates how legal status separates the two groups of migrants, but that ultimately cultural acceptance still depends on Shanghai dialect competence.
Other interviewees working in state-owned or foreign companies echo Chengyu’s observation about the rare cases of Shanghai dialect fluency among their non-native co-workers. According to them, even their highly educated non-native colleagues generally hold a distant and somewhat indifferent attitude toward the Shanghai dialect.

Outside of the workplace, interviews with native Shanghairen who married non-natives speak of the importance of non-natives’ adoption of the Shanghai dialect for social integration into the native Shanghairen community. When asked about native Shanghairen’s language choices at home, and their understanding of the association between Shanghai dialect competence and Shanghairen identity, they routinely expressed surprise when some non-natives gained dialect competency quickly. Jin Dabei, who is married to a non-native and has a two-year-old son, shared with me anecdotes of her non-native colleagues’ journey of cultural assimilation:

Some [female] non-natives, especially those who married native Shanghairen, tend to learn the dialect with more enthusiasm. They would suggest using Shanghai dialect when conversing with me. A colleague of mine can already speak the dialect quite well that she shows hardly any accent. Sometimes when I initiate a conversation in Putonghua, she will reply in the dialect.

Dabei approves of her colleague’s dialect competence, and then provides a “complete” case connecting hukou status, educational level, marital situation, and Shanghai dialect acquisition:

Another colleague of mine from Shanxi [about 1,000 miles inland from Shanghai] applied for Shanghai hukou after getting her MBA. She learned the dialect very quickly and married a native Shanghairen.

In both cases, intermarriage with a native Shanghairen and acquiring a legal status are indicative of a motivation to complete cultural assimilation. By approving non-natives’ Shanghai dialect competence, a native Shanghairen such as Dabei seems accept non-natives as well-behaved guests in the “host city” of Shanghai. From this perspective, it appears too soon to suggest that native Shanghairen accept them as peer residents, who share in the ownership of the city.
The spectrum of acceptance and assimilation, in terms of the association between Shanghai dialect competence and Shanghairen identity, indicates that as long as non-natives are willing to learn the dialect, not necessarily to the level of accent-free fluency, native Shanghairen would show hospitality. This seems to align the official motto of Shanghai, “an ocean receiving hundreds of streams” (hai na bai chuan), but at the same time deviates from that sentiment in important ways. This motto suggests an all-embracing outlook and acceptance; in practice, however, it puts more emphasis on hospitality rather than a willingness to share ownership. As Derrida makes explicit, hospitality requires one to be the “master” of the house, city, country or nation (2000), hence it reestablishes the ownership of the host, and to a certain degree, the owner’s control of the people who are being hosted.

Where the deviation from the official motto takes place is at the surface. Native Shanghairen understand themselves as “moral” owners (Zukin, et al., 2015), who have the right to determine the language spoken “at home”. At an institutional level, however, a different understanding emerges. Not only the central state determines the language spoken, but also since a selected group of non-natives are granted Shanghai hukou, they legally have the right to share ownership of the city with natives. Further, non-natives who do not speak the Shanghai dialect have the support from the state for their language choice at their new home, i.e. Putonghua. Disjunctions between moral, legal, and institutional forms of integration in the city contribute to the ambiguity surrounding the association between dialect competences and achieving accepted status as Shanghairen. This in turn engenders more conflicts around language spoken in Shanghai.

**Language Conflicts**

Recent language conflicts between native Shanghairen and New Shanghairen center on informal social encounters between the two groups, where the latter do not allow the former to
speak the dialect in public, for the suggested purpose of universal communication. This is perceived by native Shanghairen as non-natives’ attempt to challenge the natives’ right to the linguistic space of the city, undermine the linguistic habitus of native Shanghairen, and dilute the dialect’s status as integral to Shanghairen identity.

At the surface, this conflict has to do with the fact that the Shanghai dialect and Putonghua Mandarin belong to different linguistic families. The vast difference in pronunciation between the two languages means even bilingual natives must exert some effort to switch back and forth between the two, “switching brains” as some natives put it. This belief is in essence language ideologies held by native Shanghairen to inform their linguistic practices. Thus they claimed that out of convenience, they would prefer Shanghai dialect when the audience is a fellow Shanghai dialect speaker. According to my native Shanghairen interviewees, non-natives within earshot interpret this as a form of social exclusion, insisting that native Shanghairen communicate in Putonghua, while native Shanghairen do not think it is relevant or necessary to include nearby non-natives in conversation.

Using the analogy of a host accommodating guests, Peng, 43, a native Shanghairen graphic designer working in a French fast-moving consumer goods company finds non-natives’ attitudes and practices disrespectful, and to a certain extent suggests that it is an attempt by the guest to take over the host’s position:

Their attitude is ‘I don’t understand [Shanghai dialect], so no one is allowed to speak it when I am around, even though the communication is between native Shanghairen and I am not part of it’.

Indeed, the unintelligibility of the Shanghai dialect to non-natives is a clear sign they are being excluded from a conversation. But to native Shanghairen, non-natives’ attitude is unacceptable. From Peng’s understanding, the Putonghua-speaking non-natives discriminate against the Shanghai dialect:
They think Shanghai dialect is backwards, not decent, so that they don’t need to learn it, and they don’t want to learn it. They will be happy when Shanghai dialect is eliminated.

Peng’s opinion demonstrates the linguistic deprivation he feels. The opinion of non-natives towards Shanghai dialect that he perceives has roots in decades of language ideology imposed by state policies promoting Putonghua.

Most native Shanghaiiren interviewees, such as Peng, spoke about the desire for a mutually respected boundary of linguistic space. As the social boundary between monolingual Putonghua-speaking non-natives and bilingual natives dissipates further, the prospect of a linguistically segregated social space becomes less likely. Peng’s opinion about the language conflict indicates native Shanghaiiren’s unease about the diminishing linguistic space and perceived disrespect from non-natives. Moreover, it also points to the social mechanisms that breed the conflicts in public. Peng suggests a simple solution to the language conflict, leaving aside the fact that the generation of native Shanghaiiren born after 1990 rarely speak the dialect due to the state’s promotion of Putonghua, as I have shown in chapter three:

Ru Xiang Sui Su [the equivalent Western idiom is When in Rome, do as the Romans do]. If they don’t want to learn, if they reject Shanghai dialect, then please go home. Shanghai does not welcome you!

Although Peng clearly regards himself as the host, who, according to Derrida (2000), holds a certain degree of control over the guest, migration policy is determined by the central state and the municipal government’s talent-recruitment strategies. Native Shanghaiiren have little space to maneuver—except in cultural practices that they control, such as their linguistic habitus.

My deeper investigation into the issues of language competence revealed that Shanghai dialect incompetence among non-natives generates and escalates conflicts. According to Gumperz, inter-group conflicts arise when interactions normally seen as routine, in this case speaking the dialect to strangers, are repeatedly met with unforeseen communication problems (1982:2-3).
These conflicts do not go away with the intensity and frequency of encounters, rather, every new isolated encounter adds to the misunderstanding and frustration. Eventually, misunderstandings can harden into value-laden ideological distinctions between in-groups and outsiders. Therefore, the growing social integration that we have seen in the first half of this chapter does not necessarily erase boundaries between natives and non-natives, even though to a certain extent it reduces prejudice and discrimination.

The crucial factor for local identity is determined by embodied linguistic capital. Regardless of achieved legal and socioeconomic status, a part of the Shanghairen identity is forever elusive without the linguistic capability to converse in Shanghai dialect. Only those who “truly” desire Shanghairen identity can achieve this linguistic capital. As Zhu Zhenmiao, a dialect preservation activist says:

I regard those enthusiastically learning Shanghai dialect as no doubt Shanghairen, even though they are not fluent, and have come to the city only for a few years. His/her active learning demonstrates his/her identification with the local culture.

According to his interpretation, non-natives’ attitude toward learning the dialect is more important than fluently speaking the language itself. Their enthusiasm connects these particular non-natives to the whole set of cultural values and ways of thinking shared by native Shanghairen. At the same time, Zhu Zhenmiao rejects both institutional criteria of moral ownership and hukou-based legal recognition:

Conversely, even if you were born in Shanghai and live in Shanghai for your whole life, without stepping foot outside of the city boundary even once, as long as you think of Shanghai dialect as backward and useless, and urge your child to speak Putonghua, I don’t count you as a Shanghairen.

He excludes anyone, even native-born Shanghairen, who devalue the local linguistic culture. Peng, a native Shanghairen who does not take part in the preservation movement, shares this strong opinion on this issue: “Whoever speaks Shanghai dialect is [part of the Shanghairen] family.”
To sum up, the tensions between dialect competence and Shanghairen identity, “New” or not, are beyond the formal criteria of legal or socioeconomic status. These tensions speak to cultural assimilation. Further, increased social integration does not lead to the erasure of the boundary set by linguistic differences. The evidence discussed above is further compounded by my ethnographic experience in public spaces such as subway stations or retail settings in late 2013 in Shanghai, where I discovered that all conversations strangers initiated with me were in Putonghua. As soon as I dropped a trace of Shanghai accent in speaking Putonghua, those native Shanghairen among them would immediately switch to Shanghai dialect to continue the conversation, signaling a feeling of security and trust shared with insiders. This insider membership can be granted to those who learn to speak Shanghai dialect as well, but ultimately it is the set of group characteristics I call Shanghairen habitus, including the ability to speak the specific dialect of the city.

Shanghairen Habitus

Use of Shanghai dialect still implies—in Shanghairen’s language ideology—that the speaker is urbane, civil, and knows how to behave properly in a big city. Thus, the significance of the dialect to local identity also lies in the idea that language embodies the intellectual wealth of the people who use it (Hale, 1999: 204). The Shanghai dialect represents and contains wisdom developed and passed down through generations of aspiring Shanghairen, striving to better navigate the overwhelming metropolis of Shanghai.

Yixin, who has worked for Boeing in Shanghai and Hong Kong since the 1980s, shared his insight on the close association between Shanghairen identity and speaking Shanghai dialect:
Shanghai dialect is one of the most important characteristics of a Shanghainese. The words you choose and the way you speak determine the mode of your thinking, hence, your behavior.

To him, a person’s upbringing is clearly shown in the way that they speak and think. Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz’s argument on the symbolic representation of identity suggests that distinction is drawn through behavioral and thought patterns (1982:2). From a Bourdieusian perspective, the differences in behavior and thought patterns are the enactment of habitus; specifically, the reflection and results of individuals’ socioeconomic backgrounds and the broad social environment they grew up in (1984). Here, what Yixin exemplifies is a Shanghairen habitus represented by dialect competence. Growing up in metropolitan Shanghai, which provided relatively higher quality of life and more access to cultural and educational institutions even in the Maoist era, influenced ways of thinking, and speaking, becoming a set of behaviors.

To a certain extent, the cultural distinction between Shanghairen and non-natives (Waidiren) represented through dialect makes native Shanghairen see the regional identity as something close to an ethnicity. This quasi-ethnicity is created when the native Shanghairen community defines itself against a cumulative category of Waidiren, which is the Putonghua-speaking group that encompasses elites and professionals, as well as manual laborers from the rest of the country. Competence in the dialect represents the socially constructed disposition of the linguistic habitus, which weighs significantly for Shanghairen identity, as Yixin elaborated further:

The Shanghai dialect pronunciation and word choices express what kind of a person you are when you interact with other people and deal with things, your manner and your demeanor. Your tone and your facial expression would be different when speaking the Shanghai dialect.

He is proud of the embedded elegance in the Shanghai dialect, and how it differs from Putonghua Mandarin.
Important to note here is that most native Shanghairen, except those in their 70s and older, are bilingual. The contrast between the natives and Waidiren is not between two monolingual groups, but between a bilingual local group and perceived monolingual Putonghua speakers. What Yixin articulates is the ability to correctly switch between two languages, and the linguistic habitus deployed to demonstrate a set of characteristics beyond those associated with speaking Putonghua. His understanding of the association between speaking Shanghai dialect and a Shanghairen identity highlights not only the language competence, but the language preference aspect of the linguistic habitus.

Beyond linguistic competence, the assumed civility, manner, or distinctive character communicated through the Shanghai dialect forms the core of a Shanghairen habitus. As Yu Qiuyu, a renowned Chinese writer, acknowledges in a piece titled “Shanghairen” in his book A Bittersweet Journey through Culture (Wen Hua Ku Lue) published in 1992, that the characteristics of Shanghairen are distilled into a few traits. The first and foremost is tolerance, and to a certain extent a Simmelian indifference, captured in the common Shanghai dialect phrase “go gui go” (mind one’s own business).

This is a point the author of the recent best-selling Shanghai dialect novel, Jin Yucheng, also stressed over our interview in the fall of 2013. According to both writers, tolerance is a trait developed in the cosmopolitan culture of Old Shanghai in the late 19th century. The phrase “go gui go”, and the attitude behind it, is the closest thing to the notion of multiculturalism in current China, because in essence it accepts the rationale of various viewpoints and ways of life. According to Yu Qiuyu, it is a social contract of coexistence and mutual benefits born from the promises of a

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54 Native Shanghairen are aware that most migrants speak their hometown dialects besides Putonghua, but to emphasize the distinction, they loosely group all non-speakers of Shanghai dialect as monolingual Putonghua speakers.
multicultural world (1992). In addition to this utopian view, we should not forget the sociopolitical context—segregated jurisdictions between imperialist powers in Old Shanghai—when this key component of the Shanghairen habitus was born. “Go guì gu” was the best translation of Simmel’s blasé attitude which was displayed by dwellers in Berlin coping with metropolitan life (2002[1903]). Hundreds of thousands of migrants from other parts of China needed to adapt on a daily basis, and to respect one another’s language, culture, religion and viewpoint.

Shanghairen have witnessed so much and learned to keep their distance in a century and a half of political, social and cultural vicissitudes. Colonialism since the mid-19th century, occupation by Japan during WWII, the Communist Party founding the People’s Republic, the Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the shift of national cultural center from Shanghai to Beijing, economic reforms, massive internal migration, and Shanghai acquiring global city status; amidst all these changes, Shanghairen learned to mind only one’s own business. In doing so, they become tolerant, suspicious and distant observers, not wholeheartedly submitting to any authority (Yu, 2001).

To navigate all these changes, Shanghairen developed a strategy to maximize the usage of time and money, while simultaneously minimizing one’s effort. This is a type of habitus similar to dwellers of most commercial cities including New York City. It is understood to be shrewd and petty by non-natives, while Shanghairen regard it as the very principle of survival in the urban jungle. This principle leads to unwritten rules shared by Shanghairen when conducting business or interacting with strangers. For non-natives unfamiliar with this, a normal social interaction may end up in misunderstanding or even accusations of rudeness or discrimination. Nurse Le, who works in the pediatric hospital described a scenario commonly seen there:

[Native] Shanghairen usually estimate how much time [to wait] for each step, seeing the doctor, getting blood test, fetching the lab report to the doctor, paying in
the lobby or getting the medication, etc. They will manage to get through these steps in a calculated order after studying the length of lines. But non-natives usually don’t understand it when we [nurses] suggest them to do likewise, and think some natives cut lines when the latter get everything done before them.

The difference Le found about non-natives, echoing Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz’s argument, cited earlier, that isolated incidents suggesting different ways of thinking reinforce the symbolic representation of identity (1982:2). Material roots for the difference in habitus lie in the social context of Shanghairen’s upbringing. Native Shanghairen urban sociologist Yu Hai attributes this Shanghairen logic to the crowded alleyway dwellings (2012). Over decades, the limited social resources and crowded space and the proximity to and frequent contact with strangers have contributed to Shanghairen’s strategy for navigating their daily lives.

From another perspective, the tendency to micro-manage one’s daily life perpetuates negative stereotypes about Shanghairen. As Yu Qiuyu points out, the shrewdness of Shanghairen molds them more into petty bourgeoisie than warriors (2001). This “go gui go” mentality, the epitome of Shanghairen habitus, is regarded as a virtue by native Shanghairen, but as a calculated coldness, or even hostility by non-natives. Yufeng provided me with a vivid depiction of this difference in terms of the practice of “going Dutch” between him and his non-native wife, who originates from northern China:

There is a cultural difference between me and my wife. For a Shanghairen, it is normal to be clear in financial matters, even with people close to you. But for people in other parts of China, such as my wife from the north, it is very calculative, cold rationality. She would feel hurt because to her it means I don’t trust her, look down on her or regard her as family.

To him, borrowing an American idiom, “Short reckonings make long friends.” This is the kind of proper conduct every Shanghairen is taught from a young age, and takes for granted in social interactions. But his wife was clearly socialized to think otherwise.
Scholarly literature stresses that Shanghai is and always has been a place where hundreds of thousands of strangers come and go, and so it is important to take care of one’s own welfare and wellbeing, especially financially (i.e. Li, 2006; Qian, 2007; Xiong, 2012). These norms differ significantly from those of the village life that still prevails in many inland places, where one cannot get away from debt since everyone knows you and your family, if your neighbors are not remote relatives to start with. Thus, in Shanghai, mutual agreement or formal contract is valued more than personal connections or favors.

In addition to the manifestation of the spirit of the metropolis in an individual’s financial mindset, Chen Ji gave an example of a second quality, which is regarded as a virtue by Shanghaiiren, but as a vice by most other Mainland Chinese:

To be polite, Shanghaiiren would pretend to get along with everyone, even with those they disagree with. For example in the college I work for, two Shanghaiiren faculty members would still smile and shake hands with each other in public even though they are in terribly bad relations.

To elaborate on how this social etiquette, taken for granted among native Shanghaiiren, is not quite usual in other parts of the country, she described the viewpoint of a colleague from inland Anhui province.

He would regard the two faculty members’ behavior as proof of Shanghaiiren’s insincerity and dishonesty. He told me that if a similar scenario was taking place in a college in northern China, the two faculty members would either avoid each other, or confront each other with open scolding whenever they bump into each other.

This example again illustrates an embodied cultural capital between natives and non-natives that will not be overcome easily by increasing social interaction, even among individuals of equally high educational and socioeconomic status.

The third and last big difference between natives and non-natives, mentioned in many interviews across age groups, is Shanghaiiren’s worldliness, shown in an overwhelming interest in
anything foreign, regardless of individual’s socioeconomic background. It is best illustrated in my interview with novelist Jin Yucheng in his reminiscences of the early 1980s:

A few years after the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) ended, foreign novels started to show up on Shanghai bookstores’ shelves. I was told only few people bought them in other cities, but in Shanghai, I remember lining up with others overnight to buy them. Everyone read those translated books, regardless of profession or educational level. A [native Shanghai]n butcher in the wet market once discussed Tolstoy’s Anne Karenina with me.

His depiction of native Shanghaiizens’ thirst for foreign knowledge and new cultural products shows the cultural capital criterion of Shanghaien identity. The way worldliness manifests itself in language is best captured in the answer given by the Xinmin Evening News reporter Zhu over our interview: “A [native] Shanghaien is someone with rich cultural experiences, is worldly and sophisticated and knows when to say what to whom in which way.”

**Conclusion**

Since the early 2000s, economic and household registration reforms have enabled and facilitated the increasing social integration of non-natives in Shanghai. Due to these reforms, we have seen a shift from a dual society largely based on an individual’s *hukou* status to one based on a more nuanced criteria for stratification. In this chapter, I have shown that the earlier overt exclusion and discrimination based on *hukou* status has, today, declined significantly at workplace, in social circles, and family – the three dimensions of social membership. However, the increasing social integration does not necessarily mitigate cultural differences. Rather, it sometimes produces backlash by reducing linguistic space for the Shanghai dialect.

The disappearance of legal and social barriers between native and non-natives has also created confusion about the criteria that define Shanghaien identity. The three pillars of this

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identity, *hukou*, urban residency, and Shanghai dialect proficiency, have been shaken by both internal and external forces. The current effort by native Shanghairen to reassert a Shanghairen identity reaches a resolution in the recognition of Shanghairen habitus, a combination of unique mindset and linguistic competence.

There is likely to be more integration in the social sphere among future generations because they will grow up in a period where *hukou* has diminished relevance in both components of modern citizenship, that social membership is extended to more non-natives, and market forces are central to social resource allocation, in terms of obtaining previously *hukou*-based privileges such as education, healthcare, or housing. In addition, the younger generation born and growing up in Shanghai now are acquiring Putonghua as their mother tongue under the mandate of state language policies. Nevertheless, due to a particular Shanghairen habitus, the Shanghai dialect will retain its symbolic power as the most important marker of Shanghairen group identity. In this way, it serves to preserve the right to the city for “true” Shanghairen.
Conclusion

In an article titled “Chengdu, China Gets a Modern Makeover” in the November 2015 issue of the *Travel + Leisure* magazine, the author writes that “for many foreigners, there’s a geographical hierarchy of authenticity. Shanghai is at the silicone-fake end of the spectrum.” The conventional understanding of authenticity lies in the unique character of a locale. Why is Shanghai seen as inauthentic by foreign tourists who expect Chinese traditional architecture, panda bears, and exotic cuisine? It is now also seen as inauthentic by native Shanghairen. This lack of authenticity, or loss of it, is ironically authentic Chinese in the sense that all cities in China are being redeveloped to be modern, global, and identical to each other.

Over the course of the last two decades, Shanghai has experienced an unprecedented transformation, as China’s economic globalization and urban expansion have increased rapidly. What the article considers ‘fake’ about Shanghai is its status as a global city and international economic dominance, a glossy sheen of luxury and power that suggests the non-existence of local character. From studying the changing language practices among Shanghai’s urban population, and researching policies in the areas of promotion of the official language, urban redevelopment and urbanization, and internal migration, I argue that the transformation of Shanghai demonstrates the power of the state, and the top-down ideology of strengthening a national identity and instilling national pride. Shanghai presents a unique case, differing from Beijing, Tokyo, Taipei, Seoul, or Singapore, in the sense that participating in globalization with state-directed economic growth, it is not a capital city, or home to a dominant national culture. In the global city building process in

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Shanghai, the local linguistic heritage has been sacrificed, and millions of Shanghairen are displaced and dispossessed, while the city has regained its status as a cosmopolitan metropolis, though tightly controlled by the central government.

Shanghai’s rise to global city status has mostly been characterized using statistics about economic growth, such as the amount of foreign direct investment or the number of Fortune 500 company headquarters, or by reference to the futuristic looking urban environment. Rarely do we hear voices from the city’s ground level, from the millions of Shanghairen who have witnessed and experienced the unprecedented urban transformation.

The last two decades in Shanghai were a period of transition, during which time the trend of “forward to the past” (Ren, 2008) took hold of residents’ imagination. But selective nostalgia for the Golden Age of the old Shanghai in the 1930s did not include the full picture of the contested social space and class structure during that time. It was a rosy picture of East meets West glamour and urban consumer culture (Lee, 1999). Changes that I have documented in this study go beyond statistics and visible architectural spectacles; instead, I have shown a contested linguistic space, a restructuring of social class. And, in reaction to these changes, a quest to reaffirm local identity and the unique character of the city. Contested social processes such as those are crucial for our understanding of the impact of globalization on urban China. The effort to build global cities during the economic reform era opened up Shanghai not only to the world, more importantly, to the rest of the country. Though under the minute control of the central government, the flexibility granted to the municipal government under the framework of neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics (Harvey, 2005), migrants and investment capitalists flowing into the city brought about a full scale of transformation, essential for and inseparable from the city’s globalization.
The uniqueness of Shanghai’s transformation lies in the authoritarian state that has initiated and carefully directed the process. In exchange for the city’s global city status and improved standard of living, Shanghairen have been relocated away from the urban center, while their linguistic right to the city is threatened, and experienced relative deprivation of privileges in terms of exclusive access to top quality social services. These changes most native Shanghairen perceive as greatly affect their daily life. In this study, they come together to tell a story of the price locals pay when an authoritarian, centralized state fashions a city compatible with and competitive for globalization.

**Diminished Linguistic Space**

In chapter three, I examine the decline in proficiency of speaking the Shanghai dialect, and decline in preference for speaking it, in response to the rising prevalence of Putonghua. State language policies established a language ideology that set in motion the dominance of Putonghua. This dominant language ideology rendered regional dialects, such as the Shanghai dialect vulgar, improper for formal settings, and incompatible with the social and economic progress of the country. With the passing of the *Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language*, in effect since 2001, the state gives the use of Putonghua the same significance as loyalty to the ruling Chinese Communist Party, making language choice a political choice. If one speaking Putonghua in Shanghai, it indicates that the speaker being a law-abiding citizen devoted himself/herself to the prosperity of the country under the Chinese Communist Party’s leadership.

Under the state’s continuous promotion of the official language through annual propaganda events and the school system, native Shanghairen have come to believe Putonghua proficiency is
an essential tool for them and their children to achieve the “China Dream”. From a Bourdieusian perspective, the state has created since late 1990s a market for exchanging linguistic capital, represented by proficiency in Putonghua, for cultural, social and economic capital in the forms of educational achievement and upward social mobility. The historical background for the creation of this market was the shift from a planned to a market economy, which opened up venues for individuals’ upward mobility, and social class restructuring.

Through language laws and the market for capital conversion, the state has successfully reduced the linguistic space of the Shanghai dialect, and driven it to the brink of extinction. Over the course of a single generation, the Shanghai dialect has shifted from being regarded as the lingua franca of a city and region to a local dialect incompatible with modern China. The state’s promotion of Putonghua has been so successful that Shanghai dialect is barely understood among those born in the 2000s.

Against this background of dialect degradation, marginalization and rapid endangerment, a dialect preservation movement has gained momentum. It started with vernacular theatre performers and intellectuals, whose livelihoods rely upon the Shanghai dialect. These advocates stress that the dialect as an invaluable cultural heritage, and further activists identify the Shanghai dialect as an important indicator of a place-bound Shanghairen identity.

The grassroots resistance to the promotion of Putonghua and a uniform Chinese identity represents not only native Shanghairen’s attitude toward the state in the linguistic and cultural realm, but also points to the lack of democracy embedded in the building of Shanghai as a global city, from the linguistic environment to the physical urban landscape. In fear that the city losing its distinct and local character, native Shanghairen have refused to accept Pudong, as the new, modern face of Shanghai.
Shanghai dialect is a hybrid urban tongue born in the alleyway housing of the old Shanghai in the early 20th century. Its vocabulary represents a way of life that has, to a large extent, been destroyed in the urban transformation of the last two decades. Those trying to preserve the dialect treat it as a surrogate for a Shanghai of crowded shikumen housing and quiet sycamore tree-lined streets that will never return. Since the material base is gone, only the linguistic urban culture that the built environment once fostered can sustain their collective memory and Shanghai’s distinct urban character.

*Indistinguishable Urban Space*

Beginning in the early 1990s, more than one million Shanghairen households were displaced from the historical urban center to accommodate massive construction and expansion. In chapter four I illustrate the multiple social processes at work in Shanghai’s urban transformation, in particular the life after relocation. Renters of dilapidated state-owned properties in the historic urban center before the economic reform became owners of new apartments with modern amenities in the periphery of the city. Despite moving up to better housing, the dissolution of residential neighborhoods in the traditional and overcrowded shikumen housing has led to the loss of a sense of community, and in particular, dissolved a speech community of Shanghai dialect speakers. Moreover, specific, colorful idioms developed in the early 20th century describing the way of urban life in shikumen neighborhoods have become irrelevant and obsolete.

In place of shikumen housing neighborhoods, spectacular skyscrapers rose to dominate the city’s landscape. They were built to impress the countrymen and the world. This spectacular vision of a global Shanghai created by the national elite and their delegates in Shanghai has disregarded local urban history, generations of lived experience, and native Shanghaiiren’s attachment to
particular urban spaces, replacing that with glass-façade buildings that render a sense of alienation and placelessness (Relph, 1976). This manufactured placelessness, a consequence of losing old ways in a rapidly globalizing city, leads native Shanghai residents to attach their place-bound identity to Puxi, the west bank of the Huangpu River, the historical Shanghai, and reject the east bank – Pudong, which had been farmland until the early 1990s, as the most meaningful representation of their city. Through preference for Puxi residency, and disdain for the architectural spectacles of Pudong, native Shanghai residents insist on their vision of the global Shanghai against the state’s and the world’s.

In turn, this attachment to place also serves as an indicator of a native Shanghai resident identity, when compared with recent internal migrants attracted by job opportunities, modern amenities, and the “global city look” in Pudong. The Shanghai represented by Pudong is a three dimensional printout designed by the state to conform to a nationalist vision, without input from native Shanghai residents, who hold on to a more historical Shanghai, a hybrid and dynamic urban space representing more than a century of growth and change. Since the opening of the Treaty Port in 1843, the changes that occurred in Shanghai never completely replaced the old with the new, as seen in the current Pudong and many parts of Puxi, but sustained a constant dialogue and negotiation that integrates outside trends with Chinese vernacular roots.

The destruction of this distinctive urban environment has led many to believe that the local dialect spoken on the street is the last remaining signifier of the city’s distinctive identity. But the influx of millions of non-speakers from across the country disrupts the linguistic space of the Shanghai dialect and contributes to the dominance of Putonghua. With the gradual decline of structural barriers for non-natives to settle in Shanghai, geographical mobility in the economic
reform era has brought back the identity of Shanghai as a migrant city. Unlike a century ago, this new cosmopolitanism now has a nationalist undertone, and speaks of globalization in Putonghua.

**Social Integration and Shanghairen Identity**

Geographical dispersion of native-born residents has not been the only reason for the endangerment of the Shanghai dialect; in chapter five I explain another process that has contributed to the language’s decline. Under state language policies, native Shanghairen, as well as all citizens speaking local dialects across the country, acquire Putonghua as their second language. Given the vast difference between the Shanghai dialect and Putonghua, and the lack of incentives for migrants to acquire the dialect, the replacement of the Shanghai dialect by Putonghua in daily communication between strangers was inevitable.

To recruit a talent pool befitting a global city, the Shanghai Municipal Government bypassed the national household registration restrictions by screening and selectively granting migrants Shanghai *hukou*. It is a legal status cementing a Shanghairen identity, the lack of which once served as a marker for migrants’ second-class status. By extending this legal status to highly-educated and wealthy non-natives, the municipal government eliminates the institutional barrier for migrants’ social integration. Indeed, my investigations have shown migrants gaining acceptance at workplaces, and in native Shanghairen’s social circles and families. However, this institutional inclusion triggered further confusion in Shanghairen identity, an awareness of relative deprivation among natives, and a contention over the right to the city.

The urban/rural dichotomy created by the *hukou* system has gradually broken down since the global city building process reached Shanghai in the 1990s. This withdrawal of the population control measure also entails a transition from a socialist redistribution system to a market-based
system that places more emphasis on personal financial capacity in terms of access to housing, education, and healthcare. On the one hand, migrants now have better overall chances for social integration and upward mobility since the structural barriers represented by the *hukou* system have receded; on the other hand, native Shanghairen have developed nuanced criteria anchored to dialect speaking, lifestyle, and mentality to effectively draw new social and cultural boundaries around social status.

Grouped under what I call Shanghairen habitus, Shanghai dialect competence and particular personality traits associated with long-term urban living such as blasé attitude, financial shrewdness and worldliness function as new criteria of social distinction. However, among the younger generation of native Shanghairen, there is ambivalence about membership in this group; since younger Shanghairen speak less and less Shanghai dialect under the influence of state language policies. This failure of the dialect to rise along with the city onto the national and global stage reveals that the process of globalization in Shanghai has not endowed the urban linguistic culture and local identity with a desirable status; rather, in the authoritarian state, such ‘local’ markers of habitus are replaced by a uniform national language and national identity. The top-down building of Shanghai as a global city has in fact strengthened development of the national state.

Promotion of the official language, transformation of the urban built environment, and social integration of certain internal migrants, are the three primary state policies that converge on the site of the globalizing Shanghai. As it once again becomes a migrant city, Shanghai embraces a cosmopolitanism with Chinese characteristics, that is, an all-encompassing, uniform Chinese identity, and an indistinguishable global city look. Rather than presenting vernacular characters,
the city pledges loyalty to the Communist Party, rejects diversity, and represents the country on
the world stage using a standardized official language.

**Future of the Shanghai Dialect**

Factors contributing to the rapid decline of Shanghai dialect in the last decade and a half have not encountered many obstacles, though lately grassroots efforts have emerged to save Shanghai’s local linguistic heritage. From my investigations, the reasons for the dialect’s dim prospects are threefold. First, the ambiguity in associating dialect competence with Shanghairen identity; as I have shown, the younger generation of native Shanghairen rarely speak it. Second, the debates within the dialect preservation community, that focus on the authenticity of the dialect; there are many activists competing for authority and fame in terms of defining “the” authentic version of Shanghai dialect, and cultivating the symbolic power of dialect discrimination. And lastly, the economic resources and human effort devoted to cultural products using the Shanghai dialect are limited and often negatively sanctioned by the state.

Native Shanghairen who insist on the significance of Shanghai dialect competence for “true” insider membership run into the dilemma that their children and grandchildren barely speak the dialect, and mostly identify Putonghua as their mother language. Dorian points out that when a language shift is already well under way, it is impossible to insist on the association between a social group’s collective identity and the ancestral language (1999:20). Defining identity in terms of language would exclude most of the younger people from insider membership, since even those who do not speak the language are still legally, geographically, and ancestrally qualified to be considered native Shanghairen. Looking ahead, the cohorts growing up in the first and second decades of the 21st century in Shanghai are native Shanghairen who do not speak the dialect. And
it would be safe to predict that without immense societal efforts to reestablish and promote dialect speaking among younger generations, they are unlikely to actively acquire Shanghai dialect as a second language, and later pass this linguistic heritage down to their children.

This leads us to the issue of dialect acquisition, which relies heavily on personal motivation, given that the dominant language ideology incentivizes only the use of Putonghua. I have pointed out the popularity of the kindergartens where Shanghai dialect is taught in Pudong, and also some native Shanghairen’s astonishment at their children’s lack of Shanghai dialect competency; both are positive signs of potential retention of the Shanghai dialect, which will continue as long as native Shanghairen realize the cultural value of the local dialect.

However, the dialect preservation activist community, which has published dialect textbooks, lexicon, and promotional materials, is troubled by debates about the “pure” and “authentic” form of the Shanghai dialect. I have shown the disputed origin of the Shanghai dialect, with disputes about whether it is a hybrid of multiple southern Chinese dialects, or a main branch of Wu language with loanwords and grammatical structures borrowed from other languages or dialects during the cosmopolitan early 20th century. Similar to what Woolard notes in her study of Catalan in Barcelona that “minority language activists often find themselves imposing standards, elevating literature forms and uses, and negatively sanctioning variability in order to demonstrate the reality, validity, and integrity of their languages” (1998:17), the disagreement over which “correct” version of the dialect to teach will discourage grassroots dialect teaching, which likely emerges among lay dialect speakers with limited linguistic background. After all, it is a language still spoken by most of the current generation of grandparents in Shanghai. Future research is needed on the effectiveness of dialect teaching within households across generations.
Lastly, the role of mass media in producing theatrical, radio and television programs, and movies using the dialect, and the general public’s access to these cultural goods are crucial to the fate of the endangered Shanghai dialect. Grenoble and Whaley argue that economic factors, in terms of financial and human resources in the production, promotion and accessibility of cultural goods, “are a driving force behind much of language attrition and may override other factors which support maintenance of the indigenous language” (1998:52-3). That is to say, when mass media such as radio and television stations, and movie studios are under the control of state agencies such as the State Department of Propaganda or the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television, financial resources are rarely available for cultural production in the Shanghai dialect, furthering the dominant language ideology that has already degraded regional dialects.

Market mechanisms offer little help. To attract the largest possible audience, media production primarily uses Putonghua, spoken nationwide, in contrast to regional dialects. A feature-length animated film released in August 2015 illustrates this market pressure. Dubbed in both Putonghua and the Shanghai dialect, “Sargent Black Cat – Emerald Star” (heimao jingzhang: feicui zhi xing) is a sequel to a Putonghua television cartoon series “Sargent Black Cat” produced in 1992, which was a sensation for a generation of Chinese children growing up in the 1980s and 1990s. According to an article titled “Good Idea but Hard to Promote, ‘Sargent Black Cat’ in Shanghai Dialect” in the August 11th, 2015 issue of the Xinmin Evening News, one of the most popular local newspapers, this animated film was shown in 1,530 daily screenings during initial release in Shanghai, and among these, roughly 15 showed the Shanghai dialect version.57 Less than one percent of shows were in Shanghai dialect. In the same article, the reporter also mentioned

that the audience for the dialect version was comprised mostly of Shanghairen in their 30s and 40s, who explained that their children were not able to understand the dialect or read the subtitles.

It was a bold effort by the studio to even produce and release a Shanghai dialect version—considering the original television series was in Putonghua; but ultimately the profit-driven market determined the limited screenings and impact. This suggests a continuing downward spiral for the future use of the Shanghai dialect in the socialist market economy in China. With cultural censorship and the dominant language ideology ever present, there will never be a “full-fledged commitment of financial resources and manpower”, which Grenoble and Whaley see as a crucial factor to offset the trends toward monolingualism (1999:54). The fewer mass media cultural products using the dialect, the less likely it is that the younger generation will be exposed to the dialect other than from family members, making the retention of Shanghai dialect even more difficult. Besides the school system, and the entertainment industry, finding other ways to prevent language obsolescence in China invites further exploration and research.

In Comparison with Hong Kong

It is clear from my dissertation research that the Shanghai dialect preservation movement attempts but so far has failed to engage native Shanghairen politically to fight for the cultural and linguistic right to the city against the Putonghua-speaking national elites. In contrast, recent news from Hong Kong shows that the “Umbrella Revolution” for universal suffrage, though crushed by the Chinese Communist Party’s central government and its delegates, succeeded in uniting the local Hong Kong people through political messages communicated in Cantonese, which is their local dialect and is as different from Putonghua as the Shanghai dialect is. In light of the confrontation between the Hongkongers and the central government’s forces in Hong Kong, what
is the future for advocates of the preservation of local dialects in Mainland China? What does the recent rise of the grassroots resistance movement to teaching Mandarin Putonghua in schools tell us about the civic society in Hong Kong? In the end, does the pursuit of the “China Dream” mean the sacrifice of local diversity and democratic visions?

In an article titled "Speaking up for Cantonese, a Tongue in Peril" in the international edition of October 9th, 2014 issue of the South China Morning Post, the reporter quoted a linguistics professor at the University of Hong Kong, local artists, and ordinary Hong Kong parents to depict a bleak future for Cantonese in Hong Kong, placing blame largely on the government’s push for using Putonghua as the medium for instruction in schools.58

Contrary to the dominance of Putonghua in Shanghai, Cantonese is still Hong Kong’s de facto lingua franca, which dominates broadcast media, print media, and is used in official speeches by local politicians. The concern for losing this linguistic cultural heritage stems mostly from the younger generation’s inability to read Chinese characters with Cantonese pronunciation, less severe than the case in Shanghai where children treat the Shanghai dialect as a foreign language. Regardless, in that news article, So Real Real (Su Zhenzhen), who wrote Picture Cards of Trendy Expressions in Hong Kong Cantonese, was quoted warning that “[i]n future, Putonghua will become the cultural identification for these [Hong Kong] children." Thus losing the linguistic heritage is in Hong Kong a matter of erasing local cultural identity. As in Shanghai, below the fear and concern about language is the issue of adoption of a uniform Chinese identity, in contrast to a local Shanghai/Hong Kong identity.

Rather than a linguistic coexistence sought after by activists in Shanghai, the circumstance is more confrontational in Hong Kong; after all, language choice is a political choice. The slogans and theme song “Uphold the Umbrella”\(^{59}\) of the pro-democracy “Umbrella Revolution” in the fall and winter of 2014 were created in Cantonese, rather than in Putonghua. Language clashes are not only struggles for identity, but also a way for Hongkongers to demonstrate their dissent from the authoritarian state ruled by the Chinese Communist Party. In a *Time* article titled “A Year after the Umbrella Revolution, Calls for More Autonomy, Even Independence, Grow in Hong Kong” published on September 27\(^{th}\), 2015, the reporter described a confrontation between dancers in a Putonghua musical performance and local Hongkongers in Mong Kok, which is the Cantonese-speaking heartland of Hong Kong.\(^{60}\) The reporter observed that “a musical performance in Mandarin (Putonghua) is a symbol of cultural encroachment by a detested sovereign power.” It is apparent that local Hongkongers regard speaking Cantonese as a form of resistance, and useful for showcasing their local solidarity and political standpoint.

How long Cantonese can help them maintain this battle front against the central government is an open question, because as we have learned from the *South China Morning Post* article, more and more Hong Kong children adopt Putonghua as their first language.\(^{61}\) Is Shanghairen’s linguistic loss a precedent of what is going to happen in Hong Kong? Or will Hong

\(^{59}\) “Uphold the Umbrella” (Chengqi Yusan) on YouTube. Retrieved February 17, 2016, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_23GEIzJFo


\(^{61}\) How much dissent from local Hongkongers will we hear from the *South China Morning Post* in the future remains a question. One of Hong Kong’s most influential English language daily newspapers, it has for decades reported aggressively on political scandals and human-rights cases censored by the Chinese central government. But in December 2015, it was bought by the Mainland China internet giant, Alibaba, which according to a New York Times article, aimed to discipline this newspaper’s negative portrayal of China. See Barboza, David. “Alibaba Buying South China Morning Post, Aiming to Influence Media”. *New York Times*. December 11, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/12/business/dealbook/alibaba-scmp-south-china-morning-post.html
Kong take another path, such as Errington observed in Indonesia, that the linguistic stand of political and business elites contributed to the preservation of the traditional Javanese linguistic tradition (1991:422-3). So now the question becomes, would the central government’s Hong Kong delegates’ use of Cantonese slow down the decline of this linguistic heritage?

Coming back to the political message underlying language choice, Woolard concludes from her study on the linguistic situation in Catalonia in the 1980s that “cultural legitimacy fails because political legitimacy is not achieved” (1985:742). How this applies to Hong Kong in terms of cultural identity and linguistic heritage after the central government crushed the “Umbrella Revolution” invites future research.

The rapid endangerment of the Shanghai dialect over the last two decades, has kept pace with Shanghai’s rise to global city status. I question, in the face of such changes, if urban linguistic community is a neglected issue for studies on modernization and globalization. Studies in other contexts have shown again and again the loss of ancestral languages when a rural or indigenous region was overtaken by colonial, ethnically dominant or national culture. Global cities studies have shown that municipal governments, developers and local entrepreneurs often use local urban characteristics, for example, vernacular culture and architecture to gain a competitive edge, to stand out among other global or globalizing cities. The unique case of Shanghai and the Shanghai dialect lies not only in the city’s history as a cosmopolitan metropolis, but also in the authoritarian state’s participation in neoliberalism and globalization. As shown in this study, in the place of vernacular culture, a national language and a state-reinvented national culture takes dominance, and are promoted in the name of facilitating the process of globalization.

It is time that studies of globalizing cities, especially of those located in the so-called Global South, pay attention to the role of the national states and the fate of urban linguistic communities.
Findings in this study about experiences of the urban displaced, and changing social dynamics when massive internal migrants settle in a nationally and regionally more developed city apply to a whole spectrum of urban areas. Within mainland China, the Cantonese speaking Guangzhou (Canton) could see this study’s immediate implication in terms of the preservation of a linguistic cultural heritage and regional identity amidst the city’s demographical changes and the state-led globalization process.

Abroad, mega cities in India, such as Mumbai, which emerges from a colonial past and has a historical waterfront similar to the Bund of Shanghai, has embarked on a state-initiated global city building process. What kind of linguistic, cultural and geographical losses the diverse locals would need to endure, when Mumbai realizes its dream to become the next Shanghai? My findings about the price that locals pay when a national identity is imposed on a historically cosmopolitan metropolis are also applicable to Istanbul under the current authoritarian-leaning Erdoğan administration. Future research is needed to investigate the conflicts between a top-down homogenous national identity, a standardized national language, and the fate of vernaculars and regional identities against the backdrop of intensified globalization.

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62 This inspiration has been reported as early as on April 6, 2005 in an India Times article by Josy Joseph titled "What will make Mumbai into a Shanghai?" A more recent example is an article on Business Standard by Rajat Ghai published on January 29, 2014 titled "When will Mumbai become Shanghai?"
Appendix I:

Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language

(Adopted at the 18th Meeting of Standing Committee of the Ninth National People's Congress on October 31, 2000 and promulgated by Order No. 37 of the President of the People’s Republic of China on October 31, 2000)

Chapter I General Provisions

Article 1 This Law is enacted in accordance with the Constitution for the purpose of promoting the normalization and standardization of the standard spoken and written Chinese language and its sound development, making it play a better role in public activities, and promoting economic and cultural exchange among all the Chinese nationalities and regions.

Article 2 For purposes of this Law, the standard spoken and written Chinese language means Putonghua (a common speech with pronunciation based on the Beijing dialect) and the standardized Chinese characters.

Article 3 The State popularizes Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters.

Article 4 All citizens shall have the right to learn and use the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

The State provides citizens with the conditions for learning and using the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

Local people's governments at various levels and the relevant departments under them shall take measures to popularize Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters.

Article 5 The standard spoken and written Chinese language shall be used in such a way as to be conducive to the upholding of state sovereignty and national dignity, to unification of the country and unity of the nationalities, and to socialist material progress and ethical progress.

Article 6 The State promulgates standard norms of the spoken and written Chinese language, administers its use in the community, supports the teaching of and scientific research in the language in order to promote its normalization, enrichment and development.

Article 7 The State rewards the organizations and individuals that have made outstanding contribution in the field the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

Article 8 All the nationalities shall have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages.

The spoken and written languages of the ethnic peoples shall be used in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution, the Law on Regional National Autonomy and other laws.

Chapter II Use of the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language

Article 9 Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters shall be used by State organs as the official language, except where otherwise provided for in laws.

Article 10 Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters shall be used as the basic language in education and teaching in schools and other institutions of education, except where otherwise provided for in laws.

Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters shall be taught in schools and other institutions of education by means of the Chinese course. The Chinese textbooks used shall be in conformity with the norms of the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

Article 11 Publications in Chinese shall be in conformity with the norms of the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

Where foreign languages need to be used in publications in Chinese, necessary explanatory notes in standard Chinese shall be applied.

Article 12 Putonghua shall be used by the broadcasting and TV stations as the basic broadcasting language.

Where foreign languages need to be used as the broadcasting languages, the matter shall be subject to approval by the broadcasting and television administration under the State Council.

Article 13 The standardized Chinese characters shall be used as the basic characters in the service trade. Where both a foreign language and the Chinese language are used in signboards, advertisements, bulletins, signs, etc., as is needed by the trade, the standardized Chinese characters shall be used as far as the Chinese Language is concerned.

People working in the service trade are encouraged to use Putonghua when providing services.

Article 14 The standard spoken and written Chinese language shall be used as the basic spoken and written language in the following circumstances:

(1) spoken and written language for broadcasting, films and TV programs;
(2) written language for the facilities in public places;
(3) written language in signboards and advertisements;
(4) names of enterprises and other institutions; and
(5) packaging and specifications of commodities marketed in the country.

Article 15 The standard spoken and written Chinese language used in information processing and information technology products shall be in conformity with the norms of the State.
Article 16 Where the relevant provisions of this Chapter are concerned, local dialects may be used under the following circumstances:

(1) when State functionaries really need to use them in the performance of official duties;

(2) where they are used in broadcasting with the approval of the broadcasting and television administration under the State Council or of the broadcasting and television department at the provincial level;

(3) where they are needed in traditional operas, films and TV programs and other forms of art; and

(4) where their use is really required in the publishing, teaching and research.

Article 17 Where by the relevant provisions of this Chapter are concerned, the original complex or the variant forms of Chinese characters may be retained or used under the following circumstances:

(1) in cultural relics and historic sites;

(2) the variant forms used in surnames;

(3) in works of art such as calligraphy and seal cutting;

(4) handwritten inscriptions and signboards;

(5) where their use is required in the publishing, teaching and research; and

(6) other special circumstances where their use is approved by the relevant departments under the State Council.

Article 18 The "Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet" shall be used as the tool of transliteration and phonetic notation for the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

The "Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet" is the unified norm of the Roman letters for transliterating the names of Chinese people and places as well as Chinese documents and is used in the realms where it is inconvenient to use the Chinese characters or where the Chinese characters cannot be used.

Chinese phonetic alphabets shall be used in primary education.

Article 19 All staff members who need to use Putonghua as their working language shall have the ability to speak Putonghua.

The Putonghua level of those who use Putonghua as their working language, such as broadcasters, program hosts and hostesses, actors and actresses of films, TV series and plays, teachers and State functionaries shall reach the respective standards set by the State; those who have not yet reached such standards shall receive different training, as the case may be.

Article 20 Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters shall be taught in classes for foreigners who are learning Chinese.

Chapter III Administration and Supervision
Article 21 The department in charge of the work related to spoken and written language under the State Council shall be responsible for planning, guiding, administering and supervising the work related to the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

The departments concerned under the State Council shall administer the use of the standard spoken and written Chinese language in their own departments.

Article 22 Local departments in charge of the work related to spoken and written language and other departments concerned shall administer and supervise the use of the standard spoken and written Chinese language within their own administrative areas.

Article 23 The administrative departments for industry and commerce under the local people's governments at or above the county level shall administer and supervise the use of spoken and written language in the names of enterprises and commodities as well as in advertisements.

Article 24 The department in charge of the work related to spoken and written language under the State Council shall issue standards for the test of Putonghua at different grades.

Article 25 The department in charge of the work related to spoken and written language under the State Council or other departments concerned shall make arrangements for the examination of the translation of the proper nouns like the names of foreigners and foreign places and the scientific and technical terms into the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

Article 26 Any citizen may make criticism and put forward suggestions where the use of spoken and written language is at variance with the norms of the standard spoken and written Chinese language and is in violation of the relevant provisions in Chapter II of this Law.

Where persons mentioned in the second paragraph of Article 19 of this Law use the language in violation of the relevant provisions of Chapter II of this Law, the units concerned shall, by way of education, criticize the persons who are directly responsible; anyone who refuses to put it right shall be handled by the units concerned.

Where the characters used in the facilities and signboards in public places of cities and in advertisements are in violation of the relevant provisions of Chapter II of this Law, the administrative departments concerned shall give orders for them to be corrected; anyone who refuses correct them shall be given a disciplinary warning and be urged to put them right within a time limit.

Article 27 Anyone who, in violation of this Law, interferes with other persons' learning and using of the standard spoken and written Chinese language shall be ordered by the relevant administrative departments to put it right within a time limit and be given a disciplinary warning.

Chapter IV Supplementary Provisions

Article 28 This Law shall go into effect as of January 1, 2001.
### Appendix II

**List of Annual National Putonghua Promotion Week Themes 1998-2015**

Issued by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China.

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