



Mega-Projects and China's Neoliberal New Town Development--The Case of Songjiang New Town in Shanghai

Jie Li (University of Hong Kong), Rebecca Chiu (University of Hong Kong)

Presenter's email address: jessieleepku@hotmail.com

With the market-oriented reform in China, its urbanization process is undergoing profound neoliberal shifts (Wu, 2008). This paper aims to understand China's emerging neoliberal urban development by examining new town development in Shanghai. In 2001, the suburbs of Shanghai have been brought into development agenda due to the pressure of increasing urban population and the need of new economic growth poles, and the new town programme were launched by Shanghai municipal government. In contrast to the pragmatic approach of public-housing-led new town development in Singapore and Hong Kong, Shanghai adopted a neoliberal approach, characterized by mega-project development which involves image building and the collaboration between public and private sectors. The term mega-project includes two major types of scheme--an iconic building with strong symbolic significance (e.g. flagship museums) or, a mixed-use complex (such as residential use integrated with commercial/cultural facilities and service industries, etc.) (Orueta and Fainstein, 2008). Songjiang New Town, one of the three key new towns in Shanghai, has seen the extensive development of mega-projects. This includes the University Town, comprising of seven universities; Thames Town, a master planned community which brings original British townscape; and Guangfulin Ancient Culture Protection and Development Project, based on the history and ancient culture of Shanghai. While the developed countries regard mega-projects as means to confront economic decline and the threat of global competition (Orueta and Fainstein, 2008), the case of Shanghai may tell a different story since the political and economic context is different. Based on data from on-site observation, planning documents and interviews with local officials and urban planners, this paper contributes to the understanding of urban development in neoliberalizing urban China from the lens of mega-project development, including its rationales, strategies, and consequences. It particularly investigates - how and to what extent they help to bolster the place image and attract the desired people and economic activities into the new town. It also inquires who are deprived and excluded from the benefit of urban development. In this way, it helps to identify unique features of China's neoliberal urbanism given the legacies of its socialist past, and its relative strength and weakness in promoting successful urban development. Reference Wu, F. (2008) China's great transformation: Neoliberalization as establishing a market society. *Geoforum* 39, 1093-1096 Orueta, F. and Fainstein, S. (2008)The New Mega-Projects: Genesis and Impacts. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32(4), 759-767