August 1993

Occasional Paper No. 26

A Critical Review of the English Literature on Chinese Urbanisation

香港亞太研究所

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HK$30.00
ISBN 962-441-026-7

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Note

This is an extended and revised version of a lecture delivered to the Department of Geography and Geology, University of Hong Kong, in April 1990.

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Abstract

This paper provides a literature review of the forces underpinning Chinese urbanisation between 1949 and 1977. It is divided into two parts, with the first addressing the (non-spatial) causal mechanisms. Neither the ideological, the class, nor the economic formulation has touched on the more systemic mechanisms related to the socialist state and the shortage economy. By drawing on concepts of spatial contingency, spatial boundary and locality effects, the second part of the paper argues that spatial relations do play significant roles in revealing Chinese urbanisation policies and patterns.

Introduction

Urbanization in China has attracted attention for quite some time. When explosive city growth in the third world alarmed people in the 1960s and 1970s, one looked to China for panacea. During the much dramatised Maoist model of development, China was said to have industrialised without the "over-urbanisation" claimed to be so common in other third-world countries. How was China making such remarkable achievement was the major concern of the "anti-urbanism" literature. This particular focus has recently been dropped together with the demise of the Maoist road of development. Developments since 1976 have cumulated into a different development programme and a partially reformed politico-economic environment. How have these changes affected, and been influenced by, the development of cities and towns? What sort of activities have been responsible for urban

growth? Where do people come from? Have the big cities grown more than their smaller counterparts? These questions are of great concern to students interested in China's recent development.

Two important areas of debate can be found in the literature. With the recent publication from different sources of numerous statistical yearbooks on urban population, there is a growing debate on the definitions of urban population and of urban places and, therefore, the level of urbanisation (Chan, 1988a; Chan and Tsui, 1992; Chan and Xu, 1985; Kirkby, 1985; Lee, 1989; Ma and Cui, 1987; Martin, 1992; Tang, 1986). Although a "verdict" has not yet been made on this debate, and therefore it still invites more research efforts, it is not the objective of this review to focus on this interesting, but usually treated as rather dry and technical, issue of urbanisation level.

Paralleling this debate is another one focused on the forces underpinning urbanisation. The literature on these forces is growing bigger, as can be seen from the recent general literature reviews on Chinese urban geography and history (Buck, 1987; Ma and Noble, 1986; Pannel, 1990). Central to the various explanations of urbanisation is the recognition of the penetrative role of the Chinese State. In fact this is also the dimension that Forbes and Thrift (1987) use to sort out the various explanations of territorial organisations in socialist developing countries. Polarisation reversal in these countries can, according to them, be either "an intended outcome which draws its strength from ideological convictions" or "unintended consequences of the pursuit by the State of more fundamental interests" (6-7). The latter may in turn be divided into political or economic policies of a higher priority. This emphasis on the key role of the State is understandable if the objective is to deduce the causes of urbanisation from something called the peculiar feature of socialist societies (in contrast to capitalist, market-based societies). This emphasis is also appropriate given the conspicuous intervention of the socialist State in all realms of life in society. Nevertheless, there is a tendency for the literature to over-emphasise the omnipotent nature of the Chinese State, to such an extent that all other aspects of the

socialist system can be disregarded. The non-institutionalised aspect of the State is ignored at the expense of its institutionalised counterpart (Yang, M., 1989). The relationships between the State and the economy and culture have also been glossed over. In other words, the State is an appropriate criterion to understand the dynamics of urbanisation and organise the literature, but the concept of the socialist State must not be too narrow and should incorporate properly the State-society and State-economy relations (Oi, 1989; Post and Wright, 1989; Shue, 1988; Siu, 1989; Stark and Nee, 1989; White, 1983b, 1991). Besides, there is another tendency in the literature to restrictively focus on the socio-economic processes and view misleadingly urbanisation as the mere spatial outcome of the interplay of these processes. The importance of spatial relation is usually belittled, if not ignored completely. Judging from the debate in the more critical geographic and urban studies literature, it is not difficult to see that this imbalance should be redressed too.

It is the objective of this paper to review the various explanations of Chinese urbanisation in light of the criteria just mentioned. We shall divide the review into two parts: first, the (non-spatial) causal mechanisms, and, then, the role of spatial relations. In the former, we shall examine the ideological, political and economic arguments, respectively. In the latter, we shall highlight how well space has been treated in the literature. Although the literature on the situation after the economic reforms is growing rapidly (for example, Chen, 1991; Guldin, 1992; Kim, 1988; Kwok, 1982, 1987, 1988; Kwok *et al.*, 1990; Lee, 1989; Ran and Berry, 1989; Xu and Li, 1990; Yeung and Zhou, 1987, 1989; Zhang, 1991), there have not been clearcut and well developed explanations of urbanisation. It is then difficult to provide such a review even though this may be our intention. Besides, lots of explanations to be reviewed here also claim to be valid for this period as well (for example, Chan, 1988b:19). Thus, by focusing on those explanations for the period before the economic reforms, this review might also render a service to students of Chinese urbanisation after the reforms. Finally, as a conclusion, we shall

outline a few points on how to construct a more insightful explanation of urbanisation.

The (Non-spatial) Causal Mechanisms

Ideological Commitment and Urbanisation: The "Anti-urbanism" Thesis

Explanations of this kind usually draw on the assumption, if not conviction, that, as a direct negation of capitalism, socialism should, and will, produce a radically different spatial organisation as well as a new socio-economic organisation. Examples of socialist principles of organising spatial organisation can be found in Sampson (1984:48-67) and Demko and Regulska (1987). At a time when explosive city growth in the third world alarmed people in the 1960s and 1970s, and when the Soviet socialist bloc was criticised as revisionist, people started to separate Chinese experience from its predecessors and look to her for panacea. Based on a Maoist model of development, China was said to have industrialised without becoming urbanised. It is worth quoting Gurley (1973) and Ma (1976) at length on this point:

> Perhaps the most striking difference between the capitalist and Maoist views concerns goals. Maoists believe that while a principal aim of nations should be to raise the level of material welfare of the population, this should be done only within the context of the development of human beings, encouraging them to realize fully their manifold creative powers. And it should be done only on an egalitarian basis — that is, on the basis that development is not worth much unless everyone rises together; no one is to be left behind, either economically or culturally. Indeed, Maoists believe that rapid economic development is not likely to occur *unless* everyone rises together. Development as a trickle-down process is therefore rejected by Maoist, and so they reject any strong emphasis on profit motives and efficiency criteria that lead to lopsided growth. (Gurley, 1973:309-10, emphasis in original)

> The pattern of urban change in China has been fundamentally distinct from that of the West. Any serious study of China's urban evolution since 1949 must take Mao Tse-tung's (Mao Zedong's — WST) explicit anti-urban and pro-rural policies into consideration. (Ma, 1976:114)

The anti-urban strategy is identified to comprise a set of policies, including limiting the growth of large cities, encouraging the growth of small- and medium-sized towns, promoting the self-sufficiency of the urban economy, and industrialising the rural areas. To prove that these policies were really in operation, researchers after researchers referred to the empirical evidences of the implementation of youth rustication, household registration and migration control programmes and the "urban commune" and the "Daqing" models (Buck, 1977, 1981; Cell, 1980; Kojima, 1987; Lai and Lai, 1991; Lo, 1987; Ma, 1976, 1977; Zweig, 1987).[1] Accordingly, China was said to have experienced industrialisation yet without the associated problems of industrial urbanism.

Dominant in the 1960s and 1970s, this "anti-urbanism" thesis has recently been criticised on the ground of the growing availability of data and information, obtainable from fieldworks, statistical yearbooks, monographs or even policy documents. One type of criticism focuses specifically on the rationale behind the thinking of this thesis. According to Kirkby (1985:1-20), neither the prescription of Marx and Engels nor the theory and practice of the Soviet Union since the 1930s — both are considered partly influential on Chinese socialism — emphasise anti-urbanism. Having examined the objective and origins of its membership, he also concludes that the Chinese Communist Party does not embody such a philosophy of anti-urbanism. As a result, the existence of the "anti-urbanism" thesis must be rejected. The inconsistency between the rationale of thinking and the actual practice of growth restraint measures must, however, be attributed to the goals of economic development (Tang, 1986).

Another type of criticism rejects the thesis by referring to the fact that the Maoist road of development is more a rhetoric than a reality. According to the Maoist road, the agricultural sector

should be the beneficiary of economic development and urban-rural inequality should be reduced. Chan (1989) argues that the lion's share of investment until 1982 had, as revealed in the more recently published statistics, been allocated to industry (and urban areas) and not to agriculture (and rural areas). One may supplement this evidence with data on designated towns (*jianzhizhen*). By comparing data from the 1953 Census and the 1982 Census, Gu (1992:192) has detected that towns had dwindled down to half their size during this period, both in terms of number and of population size. This development contradicted what was stipulated by the anti-urban policy: if agriculture had received the deserved attention, towns would have sprung up like mushrooms. To sum up, the Maoist road cannot stand up against the empirical test, and accordingly, the "anti-urbanism" policy, which is an integral component of the Maoist strategy, must be rejected. Anti-urban practices, "especially restrictions on urban in-migration, are not necessarily 'anti-urban.' Instead, they tend to reinforce urban-rural disparities and protect existing privileges of the urbanites" (Chan, 1989:2).

On the one hand, we tend to agree with Kirkby's and, especially, Chan's reservation with the "anti-urbanism" thesis. It is important not to rely for our understanding on an over-exaggerated explanatory power of ideology or, in Lai and Lai's (1991:218) wording, the conception of the "urban question." Either ideology or conception itself is shaped by the socio-economic context in which it exists. This contextual interpretation of ideology is, as noted, not widely adopted in the literature. Undoubtedly, the Chinese literature usually takes rhetoric at face value and considers the official lines of explanation genuine. Whenever the official line claims that it has adopted a certain policy, researchers try to gather information to elaborate the policy and highlight its consequences — usually restricted to the positive ones — rather than subjecting the claim to a rigorous analysis in the first place. In fact, according to Lin (1981), analytical — in his case economic — analysis of a policy cannot even proceed unless the official ideology has been shaped or advocated, or even adjudicated, in such a way as to legitimise that policy (compare Halpern, 1988). The role of ideology is bound to be exaggerated in this setting. At the time when data and information were pretty well restricted, students from the West tended to read policies literally out of whatever sources available. The outcome can be nothing but a mis-informed and exaggerated role of ideology. However, these developments are not healthy, as they merely limit our understanding. Therefore, one needs to, like Kirkby and Chan, critically situate the "anti-urbanism" thesis in its socio-economic context.

In this light, we can interpret the influences of the Great Leap Forward (GLF) and the Cultural Revolution (CR) decade on urbanisation differently from those of the "anti-urbanism" thesis. First, on the GLF. One must realise that, by the end of the First Five Year Plan (FFYP), many of the new industrial plants built had started operation, thereby aggravating the problem of labour hoarding commonly found in existing plants (see below). In response, the State had promulgated laws and decrees prohibiting hoards on labour, capital, etc. Regarding labour, for example, He Guang (1990:51, 126-7) notes that, because of excessive recruitment in 1956, the State Council banned any such attempt in 1957. Then Mao's later call for "walking on two legs" during the GLF, however ideological in nature, came as a catalyst unleashing the restrictions imposed by these regulations. With false information — a side-product of the quest for surpassing the western countries within a decade or so — the central planners could no longer be selective and restrictive in imposing their restraint measures as they did during the FFYP. As a result, growth was everywhere, instead of being restrictively located in cities with special contribution to the economy and society. The total population of designated cities and towns concomitantly jumped from 99.49 millions at the end of 1957 to 130.73 millions at the end of 1960. The levels of urbanisation for these two years were 15.39% and 19.75%, respectively (Xu, 1986). The response from the State was equally dramatic: cutting capital construction, sending peasants back to the countryside and curbing further rural-urban migration

by implementing all kinds of population restraint measures. This response is far from ideological in nature, as the "anti-urbanism" thesis would have us believe; it is the — if not the only — practical measure to ameliorate the situation at that time.

Similarly, it is difficult to understand the influence of CR on urbanisation out of context. The measures of sending down youth, cadres and intelligentsia cannot be interpreted purely on ideological (or, as discussed later, class) terms. One is reminded of the fact that production enterprises, which had grown considerably in number since the FFYP, tended to generate an excess demand for manual labour rather than for mental labour. As the latter was not required by industrial production, they did not deserve staying in the state sectors and the cities.[2] It was equally necessary to "discard" them from the perspective of state control. The imperative to control had imposed restrictions on the number and composition of urban residents (see below). These developments, which had laid down the material conditions for sending people back to the countryside, provided also the context for couching such policies in ideological terms. In short, the above has used the GLF and the CR to illustrate the importance of situating the "anti-urbanism" thesis in its context.

On the other hand, we cannot agree with Chan's (1989) rather positivistic critique. It is not necessary to accept his argument merely on the empirical evidence provided. Even though more investment had been allocated to industry (and urban areas), we cannot argue definitely that urbanisation policy was not anti-urban in intention. Anti-urban intention and the lack of state investment in agriculture are not necessarily contradictory, as there are always "unintended consequences."[3] Policies with anti-urban intention at the level of the Politburo may be transformed during the more detailed formulation stage at, say, the State Planning Commission, needless to say transformation during the later implementation stage. For a setting like China, which is characterised by numerous policy making and implementation institutions, "unintended consequences" are bound to happen. Lieberthal and Oksenberg's (1988) analysis of the intervening role

of state bureaucracy in energy policy making tends to support our argument here. They also find that the centre-local relation has rendered the policy outcome different from its original intent. Oi's (1989) analysis of agricultural policies highlights again the discrepancy between policy formulation and implementation. Politics do not merely stop at the formulation stage, as the local cadres, an important component in the State-society relation, have played a significant intervening role in implementation. Finally, Kornai's (1980a, 1980b) classical study of the interaction between central-planners and their subordinate control organisations and production enterprises in socialist economies in general points to the fact that the planned investment and production targets and the actual outcomes usually do not match with each other. In contrast to the conventional wisdom, Bachman (1991) and White, III (1991) warn us not to attribute policies of the GLF and CR, respectively, to Mao himself. Instead, one needs to focus on the administrative structure. Findings from these studies reflect the need to pay adequate attention to the form and content of the Chinese State — or a more informed theory of the State — in order to shed more lights on the "anti-urbanism" thesis. What we have argued here is that, by focussing on the empirical regularities of heavy investment in industry and low labour productivity, on the one hand, and small population growth in urban areas and anti-urban practices, on the other, Chan's argument might have committed the identification error so commonly found in many other — mostly economics-oriented — analyses (Sayer, 1976:198). The causal relationship might be different from what he postulates. Or, in realist account, he has failed to provide a causal claim, because the latter "is not about a regularity between separate things or events but about what an object is like and what it can do and only derivatively what it *will do* in any particular situation" (Sayer, 1992:105, emphasis in original). The Chinese society may possess the power to favour urban areas, even though it might or might not have put it in practice. Also, the outcome might or might not be biased against rural areas, since "the exercise of causal mechanisms is often unclear from patterns of empirical

events" (Sayer, 1992:110). In other words, Chan's argument against the "anti-urbanism" thesis must be read with caution.

To summarise this section, we find the ideological explanation of urbanisation wanting, even though one need not accept all the criticisms made against it. The only way out of this impasse is to theorise the State more properly in any serious attempt at understanding urbanisation.

Class Struggle and Urbanisation

The political explanation argues that the anti-urban consequence of de-urbanisation is not so much the direct outcome of any explicit anti-urban strategy as the unintended outcome of class struggle. The starting point to elaborate this argument is Mao's theory of contradiction. Mao sees conflict and change as a continuous process, and necessarily a good thing. On one occasion contradictions are non-antagonistic (i.e. those among the people), and, on the other, antagonistic (i.e. those between ourselves and the enemy). Contradictions can be handled by re-education, in the former case, or exerting proletarian dictatorship/class struggle and finally destruction, in the latter. "Class struggle is not yet over," proclaimed Mao back in 1957 (Meisner, 1983:123), and the primary targets of struggle are "those in authority taking the capitalist road" in the Chinese State and "new bourgeois elements" emerging throughout society. Specifically, these classes include the elites created by the socialist economy and the politico-administrative apparatus and the intelligentsia.[4] "Their power and privileges are to be weakened, their processes of reproduction and aggrandisement impeded and an effective counterweight created by mobilising the 'masses' under the banner of the 'mass line'." At the institutional level, to restrict "bourgeois right" "calls for struggle against such policies as the use of differential wage scales and individual material incentives as spurs to productivity, profits as an index of efficiency, markets as methods of circulation, prices as signals for economic behaviour, and expanded links with capitalist economies abroad" (White,

1983a:159). One can easily interpret the practices and consequences of "anti-urbanism" from the campaigns to restrict the "bourgeois right." The sending-down of urban youth, intelligentsia and cadres to the countryside, the de-concentration of urban growth from the capitalist-polluted coastal cities to dispersed locations in the mountains and the interior, and the reduction of city vitality by restricting its market activities: these are said to have negative effects on the growth of cities, especially those big and coastal ones.

Regrettably, the most sophisticated presentation of this type of political explanation is found not in the Chinese urbanisation literature *per se* but in Murray and Szelenyi's (1984) model of urbanisation for socialist countries. While generalising experiences from the socialist world, they have isolated out the Chinese experience — zero urban growth strategy — as a peculiar form of urbanisation; the other forms include de-urbanisation, under-urbanisation and socialist intensive urbanisation. Thus, by reviewing their model, we might start to come to terms with the class explanation.

Ostensibly, their model mainly consists of statements correlating empirical observations, however one can re-construct, at the risk of mis-interpretation, their basic argument.[5] It is the socialist mode of production, with the resulting class structure and class conflicts of the socialist state as the main variables, that accounts for the economic policy, which in turn affects the observable urbanisation patterns. The most explicit elaboration of this theme is provided by their description of the de-urbanisation stage. During the neo-colonialist "over-urbanisation," a massive urban petty bourgeoisie was created. This loss of control over the urban economy, which was considered unacceptable by the emerging class, must be recovered after the success of the socialist revolution. "The major social purpose, *of course*, of deurbanisation is the destruction of this petty bourgeoisie" (Murray and Szelenyi, 1984:94, emphasis added). Although one of the observed features is the decline of urban population, this is not the outcome of any urbanisation policy *per se*. Rather it is the unintended consequen-

ces of class struggle. "It is important to emphasize the class character of the struggles behind deurbanisation" (94).

As a socialist country evolves over its developmental stages, different variants of industrialisation strategy will be adopted depending on the cohesiveness and responsiveness of its central redistributive power and state bureaucracy. Maoist economic policy of rural industrialisation and the resulting extremely slow urban growth rate can be attributable to the existence of internal cleavages within the state bureaucracy.

> Under the "zero urban growth" strategy, central redistributive power seems to be rather weak, and the state bureaucracy is divided. The repeated antibureaucratic campaign purges keep the state bureaucracy destabilized, and from this the rural population might gain genuine benefits. Under "zero urban growth" the development of rural infrastructure may not be delayed to the extent to which it is in the case of "underurbanisation." (Murray and Szelenyi, 1984:97)

This interpretation can be extended to account for a different pattern of urbanisation during the post-Mao period. Development of state industry and consequently a faster urban growth are, accordingly, due to the strengthening of central redistributive power in the present regime.

The other two strategies can be interpreted with the similar logic. Under-urbanisation, the expansion of urban industrial employment at a rate much faster than that of urban population, as observed in the early stage of extensive industrialisation of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, is due to the hegemony of redistributive power and state bureaucracy. As the country further develops, socialist intensive urbanisation, the growth in urban population but no drastic drop in rural population, will be adopted "when the industrial working class, and particularly the peasant workers through their passive resistance to their overexploitation by low wage levels and infrastructural deprivation, can convince redistributive power to ease the industrialization drive and move towards a more intensive type of development" (100). In other words, it is the development and transformation of the

state class that accounts for the observable urban patterns during these later stages of development of the socialist country.

Undoubtedly Murray and Szelenyi's model has made serious attempts to outline the relation between class struggle, on the one hand, and industrial development and urbanisation, on the other, but it has failed to discuss more explicitly the hidden causation of urbanisation (see also Mingione, 1987:27). How did internal cleavages within the state bureaucracy in Maoist China lead to rural industrialisation? Besides, their statement that the "repeated antibureaucratic campaign purges keep the state bureaucracy destabilised, and from this the rural population might gain genuine benefits" remains a puzzle. Furthermore, how did the industrial working class persuade the state class to change its economic policy? Simply relying on observable statistics and patterns and correlating them, they have methodologically failed to provide answers to these questions about urbanisation.

Besides this methodological note, there are a few theoretical problems. First, their concept of class is, according to Post and Wright (1989:137-44; see also Rutland, 1985:248), in itself problematic. In the Chinese economy, surplus is produced and demanded concurrently by thousands of enterprises and regulated by a slightly smaller number of administrative organs. This precludes the existence of a group of exploiters. Rather, it is the total process of organising economic activities that counts. Similarly, drawing on Foucault's (1978:92-102) concept of power, Yang (1988) has argued that it is difficult to perceive power as residing in a bureaucratic class and applying externally by this class to society. In other words, it is difficult to employ the class concept, as an *explanans*, to understand urbanisation, the *explanandum*. The more abstract concept of the socialist mode of production, therefore, requires serious re-working if it is going to have any explanatory power.

Secondly, the way they conceptualise the "ideal types" implies either that not more than one ideal type can co-exist in each period of socialist development, or that they have failed to cover all "ideal types." If the former is the case, history can only be

divided into discrete periods and each of the "ideal types" can exist only at the expense of the other. For example, socialist intensive urbanisation occurs only when under-urbanisation or zero urban growth comes to an end. How about the co-existence of under-urbanisation and intensive urbanisation? Should we treat it as another "ideal type," or what? This is important especially in the context of China, as the observable features of urbanisation in the 1980s seem to exhibit the combined characteristics of these two "ideal types."

Thirdly, there are problems specifically related to the zero urban growth strategy. Their description of the economic policy is at variant with the reality. "When we call this stage of urbanisation 'zero urban growth' we do not want to imply necessarily that the urban population cannot grow at all. The essential feature of this stage is that a particular economic growth policy is followed in which industrial growth can be achieved without any growth in urban industry. *Industrial growth can rely exclusively or overwhelmingly on the industrialization of the agricultural production units*" (Murray and Szelenyi, 1984:96, emphasis added). This is clearly a mis-informed account, as the period is shown to have practised either the policy of "walking on two legs" or the extreme version of Stalinist heavy industrialisation, depending on one's interpretation of the situation. Once demystified, the former is nothing but an attempt to raise agricultural production by fully utilising local resources. By doing so, it is possible for the State to free the urban industry to concentrate on its own reproduction (Wong, 1991:24-5). The latter interpretation, as will be fully discussed in the succeeding section, argues that rural industrialisation is part and parcel of the development strategy, a measure to accumulate rapidly with the minimum costs of urbanisation (Chan, 1989). Neither case will, however, agree with Murray and Szelenyi that there has not been growth in urban industry.

Even if we put aside the above challenge and assume that rural industrialisation was the dominant motor of growth, we have still been kept in the dark about how zero urban growth can be attributed to rural industrialisation. Supposedly, thanks to the

weakness of the central redistributive authority, there was investment in rural infrastructures to such an extent that peasants were encouraged to stay in the rural areas. If that is Murray and Szelenyi's logic of argument, I am afraid I have to say that their argument is again at odds with the reality. The Chinese State during the CR decade had not loosened its grip on the economy and society. Wong (1991) finds that the State was involved in virtually every aspect of the rural industrialisation programme, whereas White (1983a:162-4) reminds us that, in contrast to its democratic and egalitarian message, the State continued restricting individual rights and curbing the market. These policies led to "the shriveling of markets, the loss of sideline and off-farm income, declining food availability, and restrictions on treasured cultural norms ranging from marriage and burial customs to the enjoyment of traditional festivals" (Seldon, 1988:163), all these being considered anti-social. The damage to the peasants caused by these restrictions could never be made up by the very much dramatised basic welfare services such as "barefoot doctors." As a result, the attractiveness of the city, industry and the state sector was increased rather than, as implied in Murray and Szelenyi's argument, decreased. One, therefore, tends to conclude that their model, which relies on mis-informed presuppositions, cannot provide an accurate picture of Chinese urbanisation.[6]

To summarise this section, one finds the type of political explanation not particular fruitful to understand Chinese urbanisation. It is difficult to employ the class concept as the underpinning force. Besides, the detail of the causal relationship between class and urbanisation has not been worked out. We need more research on the State than simply an assertion that class, together with its more abstract concept of socialist mode of production, will account for the different patterns of urbanisation.

Economic Imperative and Urbanisation

The literature is increasingly flooded with economic analyses of urbanisation (Chan, 1988b, 1989, 1992; Cheng, 1990; Henderson,

1988:200-22; Kirkby, 1985; Mingione, 1987; Parish, 1987; Perkins, 1990; Ran and Berry, 1989; Tolley, 1987). For our purpose in particular, these are explanations arguing that the urban outcomes can only be accounted for by the economic strategy of the day. As the way in which the economic strategy is conceptualised differs, so does the causal relationship between economics and urbanisation. We shall restrict ourselves, however, to three explanations including Kirkby (1985), Mingione (1987) and Chan (1989).[7]

Kirkby represents one of the first major attempts to provide such a causal link. "It is the industrialisation imperative that has shaped China's urbanisation, not abstract notions such as anti-urbanism" (Kirkby, 1985:14). The observable population decentation practices could only be explained by China's single-minded emphasis on industrialisation and accumulation. "The role of agriculture, in this view, is to act as a reservoir and a cushion for the industrialisation." "Agriculture and the rural areas provide labour and agricultural surplus for, and absorb the excess urban population of, industrial urbanism. The emphasis on industrialisation had effected minimal investment on non-productive urban infrastructures." The dilemma between industrialisation and urban development "is to be resolved by maintaining a certain level of urban manageability. The latter can be achieved by controlling the ever-expanding urban population" (Tang, 1986:346).

Unlike the "anti-urbanism" literature, Kirkby has situated correctly the urban question in a larger context of industrialisation strategy. His argument, which has provided a skeleton for developing a more sound theory, cannot itself be a substitute for it. This is because, firstly, the subtleties of his argument have not been worked out. How exactly does the mechanism of labour transfer work out? How is decision on the threshold of transfer made? Besides, his emphasis on the policy dimension while ignoring the systemic dimension is ill-justified (see Tang, 1986).

In comparison, Mingione's (1987) formulation is conceptually more advanced. He rejects Murray and Szelenyi's formal model building approach and failure to touch on the hidden causation of urbanisation. Instead, he has adopted a more pragmatic approach

to shed lights on the *inter*-relations between socialist industrialisation and urbanisation. This is achieved by drawing our attention to a few issues and elaborating them with reference to China. His pragmatism is reflected in his definition of a socialist country: a stricter control on the exposure to the world market and a centralised redistribution of resources. Mingione notes that every socialist country goes through the process of accumulation by increasing the surplus generated in agriculture and channelling it to develop industry. Given the historical reality, increase in agricultural production through productivity gains, which means a decrease in agricultural employment and a shift of workers to industry, is not possible in the socialist Third World. As a result, agricultural rationalisation must be slowed down to, besides other reasons, prevent the formation of too large a surplus population. Secondly, he insists on the intervention of the priority that a minimal level of survival for every inhabitant must be achieved and maintained. This priority is a significant consideration, especially at the early stage of socialist development. It entails the rehabilitation of urban survival levels and "if the existing urban resources are insufficient to achieve this, it becomes necessary to shift population to the countryside where it is likely to be easier to achieve minimum survival levels and to contain the rural-urban migration processes by stopping migration to large cities, where life is more expensive" (Mingione, 1987:42). Thirdly, during socialist industrialisation, industrial accumulation is expanded at the expense of the costs of labour and urbanisation investment. This dilemma has been described by Mingione as "the incoherence between socialist urbanisation and industrialisation" (44). In case the incoherence is serious, it is necessary to adopt "saving options" such as slowing down the rate of urbanisation and dispersing its spatial distribution. Fourthly, the absence of land speculation, Mingione seems to argue, has the effect of keeping the real costs of urbanisation under control. This is a point Kirkby has never thought of. Finally, the role of peasants in the revolutionary process does make a difference in formulating ur-

banisation policies. These points have been used to interpret Chinese urbanisation over time.

Though more advanced than Kirkby, Mingione has still suffered from similar shortcomings: the subtleties of a coherent explanation are still missing (see the next section). In particular, he has not explored adequately how the centralised redistribution of resources — the management, organisation and working of the economy — works out, especially in space.

Criticising Kirkby's work for not having fully explored the significance of industrialisation and accumulation on urbanisation and Murray and Szelenyi's work for over-emphasising non-economic factors (i.e., class analysis and ideology) (Chan, 1988b:24 and 33), Chan (1989) tries to put forward a better informed theory of urbanisation based on economic analysis. This theory focuses on the dynamic relationship between sectoral development and urbanisation policies. It draws on three previous works. The first is Ofer's (for example, 1976) argument of economising urbanisation costs. To maintain high rates of accumulation, socialist countries in their early stages of industrialisation are required to channel investment to heavy industry and economise on urbanisation costs. The Lewis-Fei-Ranis model of development is the second work that he depends on to emphasise the effect of extensive industrialisation on the agricultural sector. According to the model, surplus labour will be transferred from the backward agricultural sector to the modern industrial sector in the city until it is exhausted. This has significant implication for the labour-intensive agricultural sector. Specifically, it will have negative effect on the generation of economic surplus and food production. Then he tries to operationalise these two arguments by borrowing the basic/non-basic model developed by urban geographers such as Edward L. Ullman. In this way, he argues that China, like other socialist countries, has lower urbanisation levels than those of comparable market economies. Its urbanisation policies include "a tight control of rural-urban labour and population mobility, fuller utilization of the existing urban working-age population, suppression of the expansion of urban service employment and

personal consumption in general, promotion of rural industrialization and increased use of urban 'temporary' workers" (Chan, 1989:33). It is important to note in passing that these empirical characteristics of urbanisation are no different from those observed in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (e.g., Thrift and Forbes, 1986:29-33), a similarity well recognised, and even emphasised, by Chan himself. In short, one should consider urbanisation in China as "under-urbanisation" and her policies as economising on urbanisation costs.

His work represents the most sophisticated attempt today to understand Chinese urbanisation economically.[8] Like Kirkby and Mingione, he has situated the phenomenon in the context of economic dynamics, but in a much more precise and elegant manner. Linking sectoral relationships with urban-rural relationships does prove to be a fruitful avenue to understand urbanisation. We can now make more sense out of many urbanisation policies, which are, as understood in other formulations, disorganised and unrelated. Nevertheless, his formulation is not immune from criticisms.

His whole theory is built upon a critique of the "anti-urbanism" thesis, which is, as noted earlier, methodologically positivistic. Theoretically, his formulation is plagued with a few problems too. The three models that he draws on in his formulation tend to imply that the Chinese economy is demand-constrained. This seems to contradict the reality. We will substantiate this argument by examining these models one by one.

According to the economic-base model, it is the "insatiable" demand for the products of basic industry that underpins urban population growth. If the former increases, so will the latter. The model also stipulates that the expansion of basic industrial production is restricted by the selling opportunities generated by demand. It has nothing to do with, in the strictest sense, shortages in capital, labour power or other inputs. This context — within which basic employment affects urban population growth — does not seem to apply to China. The Chinese economic system as a whole can be claimed to exhibit the characteristics of a resource-

constrained economy (Feng *et al.*, 1991; FitzGerald, 1988; Hare, 1989; Jiang and Guan, 1991; Kemme, 1989; Kornai, 1980a, 1980b, 1986:7-61, 1990:183-204; Li, 1990; Tang, 1990a:8-17; Wong, 1986). Expansion in this kind of economy is prohibited not so much by demand as by shortages of input. Production enterprises are, most of the time, prevented from supplying more outputs due to their inability to secure more inputs. While these enterprises are under little pressure to seek maximum profits due to their paternalistic relationships with the State (Kornai, 1986:52-61), the desire to raise output by ambitious production plans forces them to strive to obtain additional inputs. The result is a further shortage in inputs and then outputs, and the vicious circle continues. Put differently, shortage in workers induces hoarding, thereby increasing the labour intake in the basic industry. It is difficult to attribute the latter to the increasing demand for basic industrial products.

Secondly, the economic-base model has emphasised the free supply of population, since the dynamic of urban population growth depends solely on the growth of basic industry. This is not true in China, as Chan (1989:4) has to admit himself (also see below). Perhaps, the point of dispute is: it is inadequate to claim, as Chan has done, that the form of urbanisation in socialist economies is distinct from that of market economies while the nature of their processes (i.e. from basic jobs to population) is similar. Insofar as migration had been stringently regulated in China, it can be argued comfortably and confidently that the nature of processes should be different too. Instead of an one-way causation from basic industry to urban population, it is a two-way interactive causation. The dynamic of urban population growth in China is certainly more complicated than the economic-base model can manage to handle.

Finally, even in the mainstream urban literature, there is a heated debate on the ways basic and service industries should be defined. It is still inconclusive whether basic industry should be restricted to manufacturing (Clark, 1982:42-4). In fact, this unjustifiably heavy reliance on manufacturing has led North (1970) to propose that natural resources can be a "leading sector" too. The

Chinese context is even more conducive to debates of this kind. We feel some unease with Chan's equating the heavy industry with the basic industry. He seems to have forgotten that with China being a socialist state, her state apparatus can act as a significant "leading sector." The attempt to ensure everything being under the control of the Party is already sufficient to account for the existence of a large state apparatus. That the resource-constrained economy in nature always runs out of control and concomitantly requires additional administrative regulation is another impetus for the continuous expansion of the State. Finally, one surprisingly finds that hoarding of workers happens in the state apparatus as well as in other production sectors (Han, 1988; Post and Wright, 1989:127-8). The above are sufficient evidence to reject Chan's sole reliance on the heavy industry as the "leading sector." In neglecting the state apparatus, Chan has in fact under-estimated the magnitude of urban population growth. In sum, one tends to question the validity of applying the economic-base model to China.[9]

There are queries about the Lewis-Fei-Ranis model. This model argues that rural labour surplus will eventually be exhausted if the urban industrial sector keeps on expanding. Chan has relied on this argument to postulate that the Chinese State is required to take remedial action to stop the negative effects induced by this depletion of rural labour surplus from happening. The nature of urbanisation policies is accordingly shaped by this action. The problem with this derivation is that it ignores the assumptions of the Lewis-Fei-Ranis model. First, the model assumes that "disguised unemployment" exists in the agricultural sector. This means that labour may be reduced without affecting agricultural output, at least at the beginning of the labour transfer process. Although this contradicts the starting point of Chan, which only stresses the negative effects of the rural-urban labour transfer, "disguised unemployment" really existed in China even in the 1950s (He Guang, 1990). In other words, labour transfer induced by industrial production may not have the suggested effect on agriculture, as Chan would have us believe. The other

assumption that surplus labour exists in the rural areas whereas there is full employment in the urban areas is at variance with the Chinese reality too. In China, while there may be "surplus" labour in the rural areas, there is substantial "unemployment on the job" in the urban industrial sectors (Feng and Zhao, 1981). Thus labour transfer does not follow the logic of a demand-supply model. What is at play is the hoarding model of a resource-constrained economy. This leads us to reject the third assumption of the Lewis-Fei-Ranis model, which assumes that workers are hired in the urban areas at the point where real wage equals to their marginal product. Once again, this has never been the case in China. There is a tendency to hoard on workers without due attention to their marginal productivity. It is worth keeping "reserve" labour in the production enterprise in case one encounters difficulties of obtaining the required labour quotas in succeeding annual plans. We shall return to this point below. Fourthly, the rate of labour transfer is assumed to depend on the rate of capital accumulation in the urban industrial sectors, and profits are supposed to be re-invested in these sectors. However, it has been recorded that capital has been siphoned off to promote all sorts of fringe benefits and so-called non-productive investment by Chinese enterprises and local governments (He Yu, 1990; Peng, 1989a; Zhou, 1984). The amount of capital for industrial re-investment is accordingly reduced, and so will be the rate of labour transfer. The negative effect induced by labour transfer may not be as serious as suggested by the Lewis-Fei-Ranis model. Finally, the model assumes away at the outset interactions between industry and agriculture other than the transfer of rural surplus labour. No one can deny that agricultural production can be negatively affected by the labour transfer process. But equally detrimental is the scissors pricing issue. Faced with this exploitation, peasants may be reluctant to cultivate, and the supplies of grain and raw materials may be cut seriously. Since Chan has assigned extra explanatory power to labour transfer, the urbanisation policy open to him is nothing but to restrict labour transfer.

However, if the perspective broadens to include interactions besides labour transfer, the policy choice is completely different.

The message one can obtain from the above discussion is clear. As the assumptions underlying the Lewis-Fei-Ranis model do not apply to China, the arguments that Chan borrows to formulate his derivation must be received with reservation. Putting the issue of ineffective family planning in the rural area aside, insofar as rural labour surplus still existed by the mid-1970 (Feng and Zhao, 1981; He Guang, 1990), one can really cast doubt on the argument that industrial expansion eats up labour in agriculture and that, therefore, one should control rural-urban migration. Perhaps, industrial expansion *per se* should not be blamed for causing the problem. To push it further, we may even argue that it is not the expected depletion of rural surplus labour that has occupied the minds of Chinese leaders. Rather it is the manner in which the transfer takes place that counts. Massive, disorderly rural-urban labour migration is not permitted in various types of plan. If it be unchecked, the entire planning and regulation system, which the regime claims to be working and on which it relies so much for legitimation, would be undermined. No wonder that the Chinese have repeatedly labelled this disorderly migration "blind flow" (*mangmu wailiu*) in various migration-control decrees. One equally finds no surprise in the very first clause of either the Provisional Ordinance on the Administration of Urban Households in 1951 or the Household Registration Ordinance of the People's Republic of China in 1958 which spells out clearly the main aim of urban population regulation as being the maintenance of social stability (Chen, Wang and Zhi, 1990:45; Gonganbu Zhengce Falu Yanjiushe, 1980:135 and 142).

The relation cast by Ofer, and adopted by Chan, between socialist growth strategy and the policy of economising on urbanisation cost is a neat, logical derivation. Trying to keep the "anti-urbanism" thesis at a distance, Chan argues that Chinese urbanisation policies and pattern are the indirect but unavoidable consequences of investment pressure. This is because the central planners are keen to maximise the growth rate of investment in

heavy industry and concomitantly plan for urbanisation cost minimisation. Due to the heavy demand for capital in heavy industry, it is necessary to restrict investment in urban infrastructures. Besides restraining from supplying additional urban facilities and services, the state is prompt to reduce the urban population size (i.e. demand) by curbing rural-urban migration. Once the supply of labour in cities and towns is more or less stabilised, other policies — Chan calls them urbanisation policies too — promoting labour productivity are to be implemented. The latter include encouraging higher female labour force participation and locating production outside cities and towns. This set of urbanisation policies is derived rationally from a demand model. Although this argument is neat and internally logical, it is not without problems.

It has ignored the uncontrolled and unplanned side of the planned economy. The central planners are, according to Ofer, omnipotent and rational. They take a totally leading role and are capable of imposing their decisions on the economy. Other agents, who are passive receivers of orders, simply follow suit. The socialist system is "in a better position" than a market system to perceive and "estimate the *entire* social costs involved in the urbanisation process," and "it has better means of controlling them and taking them into account in the planning process" (Ofer, 1976:222-3, emphasis added). This might convey part of the picture only. Statistics reveal that actual investment outlays in China, as well as in other socialist countries, do periodically go beyond the tolerance limits imposed by the central planners (Feng *et al.*, 1991; Harrison, 1985; Liu and Wu, 1985; Peng, 1989a:3-216). Numerous examples can be quoted even in the early years of economic planning, as an editorial of *Renmin Ribao* in 1952 revealed (Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Zhongyang Danganguan, 1989:275-6). This phenomenon is aptly captured by the Chinese saying that "once relaxed, decentralisation will cause chaos; once chaotic, the situation will impel the re-centralisation of control; once centralised, control will extinguish vitality (*yifang jiu luan, yiluan jiu shou, yishou jiu si*)." How can we explain this phenomenon, if the planners are in total effective control? Can we

simply claim, as Chan has done, but more bluntly that it is because Mao was crazier than Stalin (Chan, 1989:14)? One sees the periodic invocation of restraint policies on investment — a fact neglected by Chan. How can we account for these policies? Can we merely follow his footsteps and argue that they are deliberately planned in such a way as to maximise the rate of accumulation? These policies are usually accompanied by more stringent restrictions on labour transfer and rural-urban migration. Can we deductively attribute these restrictions to the planners' desire to attain an even higher than usual growth rate? (Here we deliberately ignore the information problem argument to challenge his analysis.) In fact, the planners, who are usually bound by all kinds of pressures and constraints imposed by the actions of other agents, are on many occasions unable to control the economy. It is the uncontrolled and unplanned nature of investment hunger of other economic agents, an inherent feature of the planning system of a resource-constrained economy, that forces the planners to adopt the necessary urbanisation policies. The latter are piecemeal and passive reactions to problems associated with investment hunger, rather than well calculated and planned responses to the quest for rapid accumulation.[10] In other words, it may be the *system* and not the Stalinist growth *policy* that accounts for what we have observed in Chinese urbanisation policies and pattern.

Besides, the set of urbanisation policies should be even broader than Chan has defined to include those meant to curb, at least temporarily, the uncontrolled and unplanned investment hunger. Here we have in mind more drastic measures such as de-designating many cities and towns. To simplify, settlements in China are divided into urban and rural places. The former, which include designated cities, designated towns and county seats, receive the preferential treatment of urban policies. Designated cities are administrative units with city designation status. This status is granted to settlements by higher authorities according to some population and economic performance criteria. Towns are designated in a similar manner, but with different — usually less restrictive — criteria. Rural places are those settlements, such as

market towns and residential points, with no town designation status. Urban and rural places are administratively under two somewhat discrete systems of regulation. By de-designating some cities and towns, the state can drastically reduce the amount of production and reproduction investment. Some figures might help illustrating the point that we are making. As noted earlier, GLF was one of the periods experiencing an enormous pressure of investment hunger, and drastic measures were taken to put the country back to order during the aftermath. Altogether 52 cities were de-designated between 1961 and 1965 (Gu, 1992:171). The number of designated towns also dropped from 4,429 by the end of 1961 to 4,032 by the end of 1963 (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Minzhengbu Xingzheng Quhuachu, 1986:465). These had the effect of reducing not only the number of urban residents (via, for instance, cutting the size of the state apparatus) but also the demand for capital construction investment (Liu and Wu, 1985: 278-83 and 288-300). This is but one of the urbanisation policies that have been ignored by Chan, due to his restricted perspective. If we are to avoid these problems, our conceptualisation might have to, as Stark and Nee (1989) have suggested, shift to an institutional analysis (how institutions are the outcome as well as the mediator of the interaction of individual agents)[11] and also, as Yang (1988) has insisted, a non-institutional analysis.

Chan's heavy reliance on the development strategy as the major determinant of urbanisation can be criticised as too economistic. What occupies the mind of the Chinese State is, according to Chan, simply economic growth and nothing else. At least, everything is determined in the last instance by economics. Other advocates, in contrast, have coined the concept of the primacy of politics to understand the socialist state (for example, Alvater, 1981; Peter, 1987). Control of the society and economy and legitimacy of the party are decisive concerns of the Chinese State. The latter undertakes industrialisation as well as measures to curtail uncontrolled industrialisation so as to guarantee its legitimacy. The fall of the Gang of Four leading to the adoption and implementation of economic reform measures by Deng Xiaoping and the whole development leading to the June 4 Beijing massacre in 1989 are two cases in point. They illustrate vividly the imperative to control (Li, 1988:199-214; Yang, 1988, 1989). (It is necessary to emphasise before proceeding any further that our argument here does not rely on, as Murray and Szelenyi (1984) do, a conceptualisation of the State as a distinct class.) By reducing everything to economics, Chan's explanation is bound to omit important insights.

The constituents of urbanisation costs are one such example. What constitute Ofer's costs are infrastructure investment and costs due to rural-urban migrants' engaging in non-productive activities or staying unemployed. To simplify, these are costs related to economic growth. But, how about costs related to uncontrolled social and political situations? Urbanisation will incur serious costs if the society is allowed to topple the party. In many circumstances, costs related to control may take precedence over those related to economic growth. Therefore, costs of urbanisation should include not only physical reproduction of labour but also societal reproduction. Two implications can be drawn from this enlarged list of costs. First, the state intervenes into the process of urbanisation more often than is the case in which only economic costs are considered. This is because the tolerance limits, above which the state will intervene, are not only lowered but also easier to reach. Secondly, the observed urbanisation policies may be due to considerations other than economic costs, as implied in our discussion of the depletion of rural labour surplus.

The whole approach to urbanisation can also be turned upside down if cast in the perspective of the imperative to control. The practice of deriving urbanisation from industrialisation will be relegated to a less dominant position or even suspended. In substitution, it is not unrealistic to propose that urbanisation is the mediator as well as the outcome of the process of extending the state's control over the economy and the society. To facilitate discipline, following the Foucauldian approach (Foucault, 1978, 1984), the nation is partitioned into urban and rural spaces.[12] The former is subject to more direct and tighter control, whereas the

latter is to looser control. On the one hand, state-regulated industrial activities will be located where control is more effectively and efficiently exercised. This induces growth in the urban places, which in turn become the sites for locating additional industrial activities. The overall growth in the number of cities and the size of urban population between 1949 and 1976 symbolise the extension of the state's control over more people and places. When the CCP first takes over power in 1949, there are only 136 cities. The number of cities increases to 188 by the end of 1976. There are in fact 133 newly designated cities,[13] since the city designation status of a considerable number of cities has also been taken away during this period. Even more interesting is the fact that around 54% of these newly designated cities are administrative centres — either provincial capitals, prefecture seats or county seats (Gu, 1992:166-84). This reflects the reinforcement of political control using the development of cities as the medium. On the other hand, little state-regulated investment will locate in places under loose control or with minor contribution to control. It is difficult for the State to extend its control to every corner of the country. For those small-sized market towns and residential points, the control of the State is bound to be looser. Concomitantly, they receive minimal state-regulated investment. This helps to account for their slow growth, if not demise, over time. The number of designated towns drops from approximately 5,400 in 1954 to 3,672 in 1956 and 2,850 in 1978 (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Minzhengbu Xingzheng Quhuachu, 1986:228 and 659).[14] Besides, one can also interpret the location of production plants in outlying hilly regions in the "third front" (*sanxian*) starting the mid-1960s from the perspective of control. Subject to actions threatening national sovereignty from both the Soviet Union and USA, the Chinese State feels that the country would be under more secure control by locating plants in these isolated sites. All these represent a restructuring of the settlements and the formation of a hierarchy of cities and towns with the imperative of control in mind.[15]

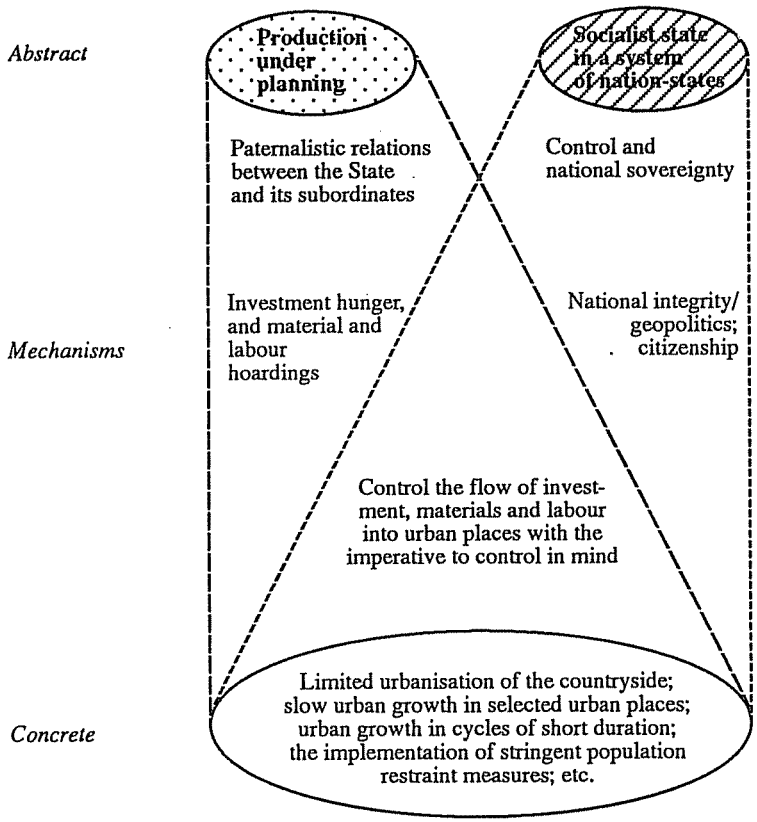
Undoubtedly, this process of extension may be temporarily suspended as situation warrants. We have noted earlier in various

parts of the text that it is the inherent feature of this society and economy to go out of control. Investment hunger leads to expansionary drive, aggravating the shortage and suction problems. When the tolerance limits are reached, the State is left with no alternative but stopping temporarily the process of extension and its associated processes of economic and social development. The most notable examples are the aftermath of GLF and the latter part of the CR decade. In both cases, the situations have basically gone out of control, and the State is forced to stop the further designation of cities and rural-urban migration.

It is possible to re-interpret the Chinese urbanisation policies and patterns over time using this perspective. Figure 1 summarises the causal mechanisms identified in such perspective. Although the full task of doing it will be left to another paper, the brief reference to this interpretation points to one of the inadequacies of the literature: urbanisation should not be narrowly interpreted in demographic terms as city-ward movement of population while leaving cities, as concrete units of special significance, untheorised.

We have found in the above that Chan's formulation, although the most sophisticated among all economic analyses, is not without problems. Methodologically, it is positivistic. Theoretically, the three models that he has drawn on in formulating his arguments, including the economic base model, the Lewis-Fei-Ranis model and the Ofer model, have problems of application to the Chinese context. Three specific points can be summarised from the mis-application. First, demand for labour, and so the urban population growth, is caused more by the planning system and methodology than by the population-inducive effect of basic jobs. Secondly, economising the costs of urbanisation is not so much due to the necessity of saving resources for accumulation (i.e. the development strategy of putting accumulation at a higher priority than consumption) as due to the problems associated with investment hunger. Thirdly, migration restraint measures are implemented to uphold the "plannedness" of the system or to maintain stability rather than to avoid the depletion

Figure 1 A Realist Conception of the Interpenetration of the Causal Mechanisms of the Chinese Planned Economy and Socialist State



of agricultural labourers *per se*. These three points highlight the necessity to undertake a more serious theorisation of the planned economy and the socialist state if our objective is to really understand the process of urbanisation in China.

Summary

We can employ the realist interpretation of theory (Sayer, 1992) to summarise this review of the (non-spatial) causal mechanisms. On the realist view, it is important to identify the structures, which can be defined as sets of internally related objects. Here, the realists are making a distinction between contingent and necessary relations. The former refer to a situation where either object of a relation can exist without the other. Conversely, the latter refer to a situation in which the object cannot exist independent of the other. A bad abstraction, or in Sayer's (1992:138) terms a "chaotic conception," "arbitrarily divides the indivisible and/or lumps together the unrelated and the inessential, thereby 'carving up' the object of study with little or no regard for its structure and form." Examples of such conception include mistreating external relations as internal or internal relations as external. Our review above has clearly illustrated the dominance of "chaotic conceptions" in the literature on Chinese urbanisation. The ideological analysis has failed to understand ideology in the context of the economy and the state. The class analysis has not realised that class is never as coherent as perceived. Finally, the economic analysis has forgotten the political and non-institutional sides of the structure. In other words, we still wait for a more rational conception of the causal mechanisms of Chinese urbanisation. Our review also suggests that a rational conception should incorporate a better understanding of how a resource-constrained economy works and how a socialist state runs a country (see Figure 1).

The Role of Spatial Relations

The Geographic and Urban Studies Literatures

The preceding section has concluded that a more rational conception of the causal mechanisms of Chinese urbanisation is still wanting. Do we include space as one of the essential features of this rational conception? Is space really important in accounting for Chinese urbanisation? To what extent has the literature captured the significance of space? To answer some of these questions satisfactorily, we might want to draw on the recent debate in the more critical geographic and urban studies literatures (for instance, Ball, 1984; Cooke, 1989; Cox and Mair, 1989; Duncan, 1989a, 1989b; Duncan and Savage, 1989; Gregory, 1985:70-4; Massey, 1984; Massey and Wield, 1992; Sarre, 1987; Saunders, 1986:240-88; Sayer, 1984, 1985, 1991; Shields, 1991:29-70; Smith, 1989; Urry, 1987; Warde, 1989).

This dispute focuses on how space/urban really makes a difference in our explanation. Originally, there is a view that space is nothing but the product of society and hence has no autonomous causal powers. This view seems to have given way to another one heavily informed by Sayer's (1992) realist philosophy. It stresses that space makes a difference in three ways, the first of which is coined the spatial contingency effect by Duncan (1989a). This effect argument says that while spatial relations are constituted by social and natural objects with inherent causal powers, they are not reduced to their constituents.

> Once formed the spatial relations between objects can have a secondary, contingent causal effect. They influence how, and to what degree, primary causal objects interact, and hence how processes work. (Duncan, 1989a:138-9)
>
> Whether an object's causal mechanisms are activated and with what effect depends on the presence of certain contingently related conditions; this in turn depends on the spatial form. (Sayer, 1992:148)

The actual development, including its spatial dimension, is thus also dependent upon the spatial relation of "between-ness."

Space/Urban makes a difference because it can activate or de-activate causal powers of objects. The intervention of space is completely responsive or derivative in this notion. Besides, space makes a difference in another sense or there is, again in Duncan's word, the spatial boundary effect (1989a) or causal local process (1989b). Causal mechanisms, which owe their origins to particular times and spaces, cannot be universally present and equally developed. One can therefore say that there is a spatial (and temporal) distribution of causal mechanisms, or causal mechanisms are spatially (and temporally) bounded. The basic difference between the first and the second effects is that, while the former effects *how* changes occur, the latter *causes* changes to happen. The other is that in the former we are referring to the contingent effects of spatial patterns on some *invariant* and *universal* mechanism, whereas in the latter we are pointing to the *locally specific* causal social mechanisms. There is a third dimension of the importance of space: the locality effect.

> The contextual effects of local causal powers and spatial contingency may be so significant as qualitatively to alter the nature of social structures in a particular place and hence social action. (Duncan, 1989b:247)

Put differently, social systems are created by local areas. In comparison, no such spatially specific system of causality can be implied from the spatial boundary effect, and the importance of space still has to be demonstrated empirically. Duncan (1989b) illustrates the distinction between spatial boundary effect and locality effect by opposing local variations in political culture to autonomous local political culture. While admitting that locality effect exists, Duncan (1989b) warns those who are prone to see space as possessing some autonomous explanatory power that it rarely happens. We are also warned not to assume the existence of locality effects merely on the fact that significant local variations exist. In other words, we can almost forget about locality effect.

This realist conception of the importance of space/urban is built upon a distinction made between abstract and concrete research. The former reflects on structures and mechanisms,

separating necessary relationships from contingent ones by identifying the causal powers and liabilities inherent in social and natural objects, whereas the latter explains particular events and situations by showing how structures and mechanisms interact with contingent conditions. Although abstract research "ought to have some spatial content, in order to register the necessary spatial properties of social structures" (Sayer, 1992:149), the spatial content is small. Conversely, it is necessary for concrete research to take account of the spatial forms of the mechanisms since it makes a difference. Following this distinction, the realists seem to argue that there is no such thing as a general abstract theory of space. This conclusion is equally applicable to cities:

> On the realist view, cities could only be treated as structures and hence as objects of abstract theory rather than merely as contingent conjunctures if they had certain causal powers which were irreducible to those of their constituents, and in the case of capitalist cities, it is doubtful if they do.... But if what happens in cities is wholly reducible to the powers of their constituent objects and structures, then cities are not coherent objects of abstract theory. (Sayer, 1984:282)

Saunders (1986) teases this realist-oriented epistemological justification for the subsidiary role of space/urban, since this is what most sociologists have been doing all the time. Drawing on the sociological giants of Marx, Weber and Durkheim (and even the latecomer Giddens), he argues that the city in contemporary capitalist societies "has ceased to be a significant unit of social, economic or political life" (1986:282) and has "not functioned autonomously of the society of which it forms a part" (50). In substitution, the power of nation-states should be the focus of theorisation. Thus, urban social theory cannot and should not elevate spatial arrangements to the status of a distinct theoretical object. To do so, we shall end up "fetishising" space, and the danger of doing so is as serious as ignoring space.

Saunders' austere version of the role of the city is disturbing for a few reasons. First, it cannot even accommodate the passive ways that urban/space makes a difference, as elaborated by Dun-

can. Whatever attempt to do otherwise will be labelled as "fetishising" space. Perhaps this is the difference in emphasis between sociology and geography. However, it may also mean that Saunders has thrown the baby out together with the bathwater. Secondly, whether or not the city can be discarded as non-causal in our understanding of capitalist society is debatable. Gregory's (1989:209) comment on Anthony Giddens' concept of the city as "power container" is illuminative here. According to Gregory, it is important to clarify the hierarchy of locales involved and, to follow Michael Mann, view the society in terms of multiple, intersecting socio-spatial networks of power. There are in a society not a single but different spatial structures. In other words, it is important to note the importance of spatial differentiation. Besides, the disappearance of rural-urban contrast in advanced capitalist countries, which has led to the refutation of the city as a conceptual tool in the first place, is not found in developing countries, including socialist ones like China. In these countries, the rural-urban gap is still very huge and to such an extent that we can almost talk of two different societies and economies: one rural and one urban. Accordingly, it is difficult not to come to grips with the rural-urban contrast. I therefore tend to take side with Slater (1978), who argued more than a decade ago to include the urban-rural dialectic in theoretical definitions of urbanisation.

The third reason relates to the distinction made between what is theorisable and what is not. In Saunders' mind, theory is concerned with developing generalisable knowledge irrespective of the particular conditions of any specific place. "Theory... is not interested in the contingent questions of whether or how specific combinations of factors come together in particular places, but is concerned rather to explain how those factors themselves might account for this or that phenomenon or tendency" (1989:232). To illustrate, he refers to how constitution and reproduction of the working class in different places is explained. It is not at all necessary to theorise space. What one needs instead is "a theory of class and class consciousness which can explain the conditions under which this or that kind of working-class culture or identity is

likely to develop" (1989:231). More specific conditions pertaining to location, which have been given the "contingent" status, can be discarded in theorisation. This rejection of the contingent as theorisable is similar to that of Sayer, although they are miles apart in philosophy and methodology. This position has been challenged by Warde (1989:279) who insists that "[i]f theorising is to be restricted to the analysis of necessary relations our analysis of most issues is likely to be very impoverished." Massey and Wield (1992:416) pick up Warde's objection and argue in their study of science parks in the United Kingdom that the contingent and the contextual are theorisable in their own right. In response, Sayer (1991:334) contends that this is merely a misunderstanding: realism does not restrict theorising to necessary relations. To evaluate this debate fully, it would be beneficial to spell out the third view of the role of spatial relations.

In particular, this view sees urban space as a theoretical object. Unlike Massey (1984), who demonstrates how social relations are affected by spatial relations through *concrete historical and comparative analysis*, people like Roweis and Scott (Roweis, 1983; Roweis and Scott, 1981; Scott, 1980) tend to argue that the intervention of space can be understood *more formally by theorisation*. The starting point of their argument is a rejection of Manuel Castells' assertion that "urbanisation is neither a specific real object nor a scientific object" (quoted in Dear and Scott, 1981:6). It is worthwhile quoting Dear and Scott (1981) at length to illustrate their response:

> A specifically *urban question* does indeed exist. It is structured around the particular and indissoluble geographical and land-contingent phenomena that come into existence as capitalist social and property relations are mediated through the dimension of urban space. The urban question is composed of a set of integrated facets, each of which poses a further question at *its* own level of resolution.... It is our contention that, while these various questions are embedded within the wider structure and logic of capitalism, they nevertheless address themselves to analytical problems and human predicaments that *cannot* be automatically read off from the overarching capital-labour relation.

> The city, then, is considerably more than a *locale* in which the grand, unmediated events of the class struggle are played out. The city *is* a definite object of theoretical enquiry (though we reaffirm that any thorough urban analysis must be situated within the wider problematic of the historical materialist theory of capitalism). (6, emphases in original)

Arguing from the historical materialist perspective (and Scott himself more specifically from the Neo-Ricardian camp), people like Roweis and Scott reject viewing urban space as a mere "container" within which general economic and social processes work out. They pursue to explain theoretically how urban spatial organisation is socio-historically produced and how this organisation in turn mediates and influences the development of capitalism. This perspective, and Roweis and Scott in particular, tends to highlight the urban land nexus as the central object and focus of theorising urban space. Roweis (1983) is more precise in his later formulation by specifying the territorial relations of land occupancy as the distinct theoretical object (for, in his case, the urban planning profession). He shows conceptually the dialectical relationships between social division of labour and territorial interdependencies, between the latter and the publicly and privately produced network of nodes and connections, and between this network and the use of individual plots of land.

Gottdiener (1987) is more explicit in applying the marxist framework to argue for a further specification of the causal powers of space in social process. While accepting the realist conceptual clarification of the difference that space makes, he has reservation about the realist contribution to specifying the role of space in empirical research. He asserts that, "unless the role of space could be specified at the deepest level of capitalist society, demonstrating its possession of a causal power," we could end up rendering "spatial concerns of limited value in social analysis" (Gottdiener, 1987:409). What is then needed is to construct some middle-range theories. Space is, to draw on Marx, seen as a force of production like labour and technology/knowledge, and its importance is captured by the concept of spatial configuration,

which refers to the locational and appearance sum of all planned and unplanned social activities at any given conjuncture. Gottdiener (1987:410) is prompt to reiterate that "it is that relation between constituent objects that enters into the forces of production as a certain space possessed of causal power." Nevertheless, one must treat the effect of space as analogous to those of the other two forces of production, because the development of spatial configuration is itself a separate source of change. As a result, conflicts between spatial configuration and each of the other forces of production are commonplace. Besides, there is conflict between the role of space in the force of production and that in the relations of production. The latter can be understood in terms of landed relations, as exemplified in the arguments of Henri Lefebvre. In short, by articulating the interaction between space and other forces of production, we might be able to specify the causal powers of space in social process and construct a middle-range theory to guide concrete research.

Central to the third view of the role of spatial relations is the conviction that space/urban does, in realist conception, possess causal power. The latter may take the substantive form of either Roweis and Scott's urban land nexus or Gottdiener's force of production. This view of affirmative role differs from both the spatial contingency effect, which can activate or de-activate causal power of objects in particular spatial juxtaposition, and the spatial boundary effect, which can activate or de-activate certain causal powers not ubiquitously found. In both effects, space/urban does not possess causal power irreducible to its constituting objects. The third view affirms, like the locality effect seems to imply, that space/urban does possess causal power of its own. Concomitantly, space/urban should be the object of theorisation. Seen in this perspective, the Sayer-Warde debate is merely a debate whether or not space/urban possesses causal power of its own.

It is perhaps enlightening at this point of debate to bring in Cox and Mair's (1989) concept of a hierarchy of levels of abstraction. By again drawing on Sayer's (1992:140-3) clarification of the relation of abstract and concrete, Cox and Mair (1989:123) argue

that "at each level of this hierarchy of abstractions one can identify necessary relationships... which at succeeding and lower levels are incorporating more and more historical and/or geographical variability." Two implications can be drawn from this statement. First, as Duncan and Savage (1989:202) have detected, the role of spatial relations "should be included in analysis as appropriate to the object of study and the level of abstraction employed." Secondly, lower-level concepts, which combine theoretical claims of necessary relations with empirically discovered knowledge of contingently-related phenomena, are better able to incorporate geographical and historical variation. The relationship between the tendency to agglomerate and regional uneven development is a case in point. These lower-level concepts, though initially contingent, may assume certain degree of necessity in their relations with contingent conditions at succeeding and lower levels of abstraction. In this way, the types of concepts which might lie behind a conceptualisation of a concrete event like Chinese urbanisation between 1949 and 1976 are not only hierarchical but quite complex. We find that necessary relations at one level might also incorporate contingent relations from a preceding and upper level. It is thus difficult to separate abstract and concrete research easily and concomitantly assign space to the latter only.

To summarise, the above discussion has enriched our understanding of the role of space/urban. In the past, we tended to be either spatial fetishist or spatial amnesiac (the latter forgets spatial differences and sees social processes as existing on the head of a pin). Thanks to the debate initiated by the realist philosophy, we have become more capable of pinning down the difference that space/urban makes: there are spatial contingency, spatial boundary and locality effects. Although still debatable, space/urban may also make a difference due to the fact that it possesses causal power of its own. These findings imply that in our understanding of Chinese urbanisation, we need to pay attention not only to the (non-spatial) causal mechanisms discussed in the preceding section but also to these effects.

The Role of Spatial Relations in Explaining Chinese Urbanisation

The Spatial Contingency Effect

This discussion of the role of spatial relations has been restricted largely to capitalism but not "actually existing socialism." While Sidaway and Simon (1990:34) have detected such serious omission for socialism at large, one may ask: what about China in particular? A glance at the English literature on Chinese urbanisation certainly provides an equally discouraging answer to this question. It is difficult to identify any work critically examining the role of spatial relations.

Most analyses in the literature, be they "anti-urbanism," "class struggle" or "economic imperative," have in one way or another recognised *implicitly* the role of spatial relations/differences in affecting urbanisation policies and outcomes. While insisting on the presence of contradictions between town and country, the "anti-urbanism" model has acknowledged that there are differences in the living standards and the level of economic development between urban and rural places, and within cities themselves. These spatial differences, which are unacceptable to Maoism, can be interpreted as the contingent condition mediating the formulation of anti-urban and pro-rural policies. In the case of the "class struggle" model, coastal and interior cities differ in the class content of residents. Specifically, the former consist of a massive urban petty bourgeoisie, which the state class wants to purge. This is to be achieved by implementing, among others, a zero urban growth strategy. Finally, the "economic imperative" model has recognised the wide rural-urban gaps in wages, consumption and economic opportunity. These disparities induce rural-urban migration, which in turn compels the central planners to adopt policies economising on the costs of urbanisation. Put differently, most analyses in the literature on Chinese urbanisation have recognised *implicitly* the mediating role of spatial relations/differences in the formulation of urbanisation policies.

The way they treat space is highly controversial, however. It is commonplace that space is treated as essentially residual, as something to be considered once the big stuff is out of the way. Most analyses assign the explanatory power to the big stuffs such as ideology, class and economy. Instead, spatial differentiation is usually mentioned in passing, but not explored in greater detail. We are told by the literature that urban and rural places differ in terms of the level of economic development, the class content or the costs of reproducing an industrial worker and his/her family. We are, however, not told how these disparities can be more precisely and completely defined, and how they activate which particular causal mechanism(s), thereby mediating the formulation of urbanisation policies and effecting the observable spatial outcome. It is theoretically inadequate to restrict ourselves to an abstract analysis that deduces urbanisation from the structure of socialism. Research on Chinese urbanisation is about concrete objects and processes *in the Chinese context*. Parallel the "proletarianisation" and *étatisation* of peasants in state-led development is the congregation of these peasants and their activities into specific spatial configurations. These processes do not exist on the head of a pin; they operate within the Chinese context. Which spatial forms do eventuate therefore depend on a host of contingently-related conditions. This is why we have to pay heed to spatial differentiation: it makes a difference!

When I say that spatial differentiation has not been defined precisely and completely in the literature, I have in mind a conceptualisation of spatial differentiation as the outcome of the intricate interaction among different processes including spatial division of labour, spatial distribution of production enterprise ownership and subordination, of population and of the built environment. On the realist view, spatial differentiation is not uncaused but caused by other causal mechanisms including Nature. Also, spatial differentiation as a contingent condition has the effect of specifying the conditions in which causal mechanisms related to class, ideology and economy work. In particular, this conceptualisation of spatial differentiation will help clarify why

rural settlements in China have continued to be disfavoured by industrial production and related activities, which tend to agglomerate in cities, and specifically in some regions. Chan's (e.g. 1989) analysis, which, as argued before, is the most sophisticated analysis in the literature, has been chosen to illustrate how inadequately space has been treated: most of the time attention has been concentrated on the causal mechanism of the economy but not the spatial contingent effect.

Recollect that it is, according to Chan, the costs of reproducing industrial workers and their families that concern central planners most. Given the need to maximise accumulation and the prevailing rural-urban differences in consumption costs, central planners are forced to control rural-urban migration. Throughout his analysis, Chan never tries to clarify spatial differentiation except when mentioning that cities cost more to reproduce workers than villages. Even on this dimension, he spends little time on clarifying why such differential exits. What he does instead is meticulously to dig up data from Chinese sources to show that costs of reproduction do differ between town and country. The methodology of obtaining this evidence is unsound. Due to data availability, he has managed to get hold of data for 1979 only. These data at best reflect the outcome of urbanisation policies, but not, as intended, the effects of activating causal mechanisms leading to the formulation of these policies in the mid-1950s. In other words, he confuses the *explanandum* with the *explanans*. More importantly, this undoubtedly painstaking effort fails to explain why investment in heavy industries in the past continued to concentrate in cities and towns, and especially the big ones. We know something about the tendency to invest in industry in Ofer's (1976) argument. But we are totally in the dark why industries tend to agglomerate in cities and towns. What Ofer (1976:222) can offer is an assertion only:

> [I]ndustrialization involves the concentration of a large volume of productive capacity in urban centers and excludes the option of small-scale rural industrialization.

Why in urban centres and not rural settlements? Chan (1989:6) is equally ambivalent on this point:

> The heavy emphasis on rapid industrial output expansion inevitably generates high growth of industrial employment, especially during the early years of "extensive" growth. This creates a strong tendency to agglomeration and urbanisation.

What spatial form does agglomeration and urbanisation actually take? Why in cities and towns? Why in big cities such as Beijing and not in other smaller towns such as Ritu, Xizang? There must be something important about urban areas, and some centres in particular. Such an explanation is a prerequisite to any subsequent discussion of the absorption of rural labour surplus and their accompanied costs of urbanisation.

This problem can be resolved by paying more attention to spatial differentiation. As discussed earlier, Sayer (1985) has noted at the philosophical level the intervention of the spatial relation of "between-ness" in activating objects' causal mechanism. Other authors — not necessarily informed by realism — have illustrated how this "between-ness" matters at the more concrete level. McGee (1991), for example, highlights that the model of urban transition varies with the spatial relation between urban and rural populations. Many parts of Asia have exhibited a model different from the Gottmann model of metropolis found in the western world. The Asian extended metropolitan regions, or *Desakota*, emerge in areas where "the spatial juxtaposition of many of the larger city cores within heavily populated regions of intensive, mostly wet-rice agriculture based on a mixture of 'skill oriented' and 'mechanical' technological inputs has created densities of population that are frequently much higher than in the suburban areas of the West" (McGee, 1991:5). Examples of extended metropolitan region include the Hongkong-Guangzhou, Sichuan plain, Beijing-Tianjin and Shenyang-Dalian regions in China. It is not our task here to evaluate whether extended metropolitan regions have really emerged in these regions in China. Instead, the important point for our immediate discussion is that various parts

of China have different forms of urban transition due to the mediation of spatial relation. Having identified the role of spatial relation, we can proceed to see how Chan's argument of economising the cost of urbanisation may mean different things in different contexts of spatial relation between urban and rural populations and enterprises.

In his broad review of urban-rural interaction in developing countries, Unwin (1989:26-7) suggests that there are economic, social, political and ideological linkages between urban and rural places. These linkages find their physical expression in measurable flows, which are associated with interactions between people, places and objects. It is conceivable that linkages, flows and interactions vary depending on the size, spatial configuration and location of the urban and rural places. This variation will also impose different costs on industrial investment. Industrial investment in physically constrained places will not only restrict physical growth to a particular form but also raise the costs of infrastructure construction. Equally important is the level of development in the rural economy. A more developed rural economy can be a base of supply for raw materials, construction materials and food. Conversely, it may be necessary to obtain these supplies from long distance suppliers. This in turn increases the financial burden, further reducing the amount of resources available for industrial investment. Finally, whether the region concerned has already attained a certain urban density — defined in terms of the number of cities, especially the bigger ones, and towns — matters too. If it is of higher density, industrial investment will need smaller capital for capital construction and shorter construction period and "import" fewer peasant workers. In addition, the total economic returns can be bigger within a shorter period of time. In summary, depending on the location of the new industrial investment, whether in an isolated, poor village or a densely populated, quite advanced region, the costs of industrial investment, including the costs of urbanisation, will vary considerably.

It is well known — a fact surprisingly neglected by Chan (1989) — that even by the time the FFYP is implemented in 1953, there is a wide regional variation in both the productive forces (e.g., Lu, 1987; Peng, 1989a:3-21; Wei, 1982:119-40) and the level of urbanisation and urban density (e.g., He Yu, 1990:25-37; Xu, Hu and Zhang, 1983). Specifically, the coast is comparatively developed and densely populated, whereas the interior is underdeveloped and sparsely populated. It is expected that there is more linkages, flows and interactions among cities and towns in the coast than among those in the interior.

As reported in many Chinese sources (e.g., Lu, 1987; Yang Chingwen, 1989:172), the distribution of industrial investment is biased against the coast during the FFYP. As many as 530 of the 825 above-norm investment projects are found in the interior. This outcome cannot be solely and persuasively explained by Chan's argument that it is due to China's quest for heavy-industry-led rapid capital accumulation. His argument cannot say much about spatial form, for the variety of forms which meets the requirement of his argument is considerable. What Chan forgets to take into account is the uneven spatial distribution of natural resources (Lu, 1987:2-3) and the peculiar regulation system to implement the development programmes (Tang, 1990a).[16] Tang (1991) has shown how the causal power of the regulation system interacts with the spatial contingent condition to produce a division of labour over space, with the interior region producing raw materials and semi-finished products for final processing in the coastal region.

This spatial division of labour is, to couch it in Chan's terminology, costly. It involves concentrating huge industrial investment in a selected number of basically undeveloped, small cities and towns in the sparsely populated interior. These isolated cities and towns, including Taiyuan, Datung, Baotou and Lanzhou, are in such a form of spatial relations that very few economic linkages can be activated. This has the effect of raising the costs of industrialisation for the nation as a whole. Not only are capital construction and labour reproduction in the interior cities costly,

because economies of scale, agglomeration economies and localisation economies are difficult to achieve; but also it is necessary to continue deploying production facilities — and even investing — in the coastal cities, because the interior cities are not advantageous sites for the final processing of raw materials and semi-finished products. This extensive investment pattern eats up more capitals and resources than other alternatives. This problem is further aggravated by the inherent features of the resource-constrained economy. Hoarding on inputs including labour is everywhere, in coastal and interior cities alike. Shortage breeds shortage. Concomitantly, one needs to cut down expenses other than industrial investment if one is interested in rapid capital accumulation. Here spatial relations between urban and rural populations play a contingent role too. In coastal regions, many cities are located within densely populated rural areas. Potential — and actual too — labour migration is serious. The situation in interior regions is no better. Although they are surrounded by more sparsely populated rural areas, factories hoard labour also leading to haphazard rural-urban migration. The spatial relations between rural and urban, therefore, have the contingent effect of invoking the implementation of stringent migration restraint measures.

It is only in this context — i.e. together with the intervention of spatial differentiation — that we can understand the rationale behind the implementation of policies economising on the costs of urbanisation. These urbanisation policies are implemented in China not solely because of the sectoral requirement of the economy, as Chan would have us believe.[17] One therefore finds Chan's formulation, and the literature at large, wanting.

To summarise the arguments so far, space matters if our objective is to understand Chinese urbanisation. Such an understanding requires of us to specify the spatial forms that people and their economic and social activities take in the Chinese context. The eventuation of particular spatial forms depends on contingently-related conditions. Spatial differentiation acts as a contingent condition, activating the causal powers inherent in the

Chinese planned economy and socialist state. Specifically, spatial differentiation can be conceptualised as the spatial relations between urban and rural populations, which in turn define the availability of linkages, flows and interactions of particular kinds (Fang and Wang, 1991:87-103; Li *et al.*, 1988). That reserves of natural resources are found in the interior effects contingently the location of brand new heavy industrial investment in sparsely populated rural setting, inducing the construction of new cities and heavy rural-urban labour transfer there. By the same token, the high productivity of coastal cities effects contingently the continuous growth in manufacturing activities and absorption of rural labour surplus in these cities. In both cases, spatial differentiation does not cause the outcomes to happen; it affects how these occur by activating many causal powers. Included in this list are the expansionary drive of production enterprises and state apparatuses, and the imperative to control by the State and resistance by the society. These causal powers cause investment hunger, sectoral bias toward heavy industry and against consumption and agriculture, labour hoarding and restricted labour mobility, on the one hand, and, on the other, investment, population and urban construction restraint policies. As a result, we observe the "spontaneous" growth in investment, cities and towns and urban population during some periods while experiencing cutbacks in these items during other periods. Spatially, because of the differences in spatial relations, various regions can activate some causal powers and not others, thereby affecting where different kinds of investment happen and how rural-urban labour transfer occurs. The resulting extensive urbanisation pattern in turn has the contingent effect of activating the intrinsic causal powers of control, leading to the implementation of investment, population and urban construction restraint policies. The overall outcome over the study period may be something like "zero urban growth." It becomes obvious that many prevailing arguments of Chinese urbanisation, such as Chan's (1989) argument of economising on the costs of urbanisation, does not make any sense if the spatial contingent effect is ignored.

The Spatial Boundary Effect

This is not yet the end of the story, since space plays another intervening role as boundary effect. We can identify spatial boundary effect at two levels of abstraction. First, at the level of concepts related to socialism, we can find processes specific to the Chinese context and not others, such as to the Soviet Union's. On this issue, one can divide the literature roughly into two groups. On the one hand, the "anti-urbanism" and the "class struggle" models have both emphasised a high level of Chinese specificity. While it is the Maoist model of development that makes the difference in the former, it is the divided state bureaucracy in the latter. On the other hand, the "economic imperative" model, as represented by Chan (1989), has stressed that the processes effecting Chinese urbanisation are no different from those of the Soviet Union. There are problems with both groups of models, as each of them has ignored the existence of the other. There are features peculiar to China, but the issue is how to treat them in light of the features systemic to socialism in general. Our argument is that this can be achieved comfortably by viewing these peculiar features as part of the spatial boundary effect.

It is undeniable that the Chinese planned economy and socialist state consist of some features not found in other socialist countries. Even during the time of establishing the central planning system in the early 1950s, China already exhibits her specificity. Zhou (1984:60-2) observes that the sub-components of industry, transport, capital construction, plan co-ordination, material allocation and wage-setting follows the Soviet experiences, whereas others such as agriculture, commerce, budgetting, finance and price-setting learn from the past experiences of the previously liberated districts and Yan'an. The latter sub-components are characterised by the practices of self-reliance and self-sufficiency and provision by rationing. It is necessary to remark immediately that even the former are not an exact replica of the Soviet model, which is considered unsuitable to the Chinese situation by Chen Yun, China's foremost economist, back in 1951:

"Since China is an agricultural country, it is impossible to record statistically the numbers of chicken and of pigs raised by each household" (quoted in Zhou (1984:217), my translation). According to Zhou (1984:217), China has simplified the Soviet model by reducing the number of planning forms from 257 in 1953 to 161 in 1954. The numbers of targets for these two years are 3,381 and 2,454, respectively. Given that material balance is the essence of Soviet central planning, we can also quote the number of material balances for the annual plan to illustrate its difference with China's. The State Planning Commission of China is responsible for 112 balances for essential materials (*tongpei*) in 1953, the first year of the FFYP. In 1957, at the height of the FFYP and of centralisation, the number increases to 231. This number rises to 256 in 1963 and 370 in 1965 and then falls sharply and finally reaches 53 in 1978 (Zhou, 1984:519). For the Soviet Union, *Gosplan SSSR* (the Soviet counterpart of the State Planning Commission) draws up 277 balances for funded commodities (equivalent to *tongpei*) in 1928, the first year of Soviet Union's First Five Year Plan. In the mid-1980s, *Gosplan* prepares some 2,000 balances (Gregory and Stuart, 1990:175). The contrast between the Soviet Union and China is very sharp, even judging from these scattered figures. Thus, Chinese economic planning is highly aggregated and ill-defined, covering a much smaller number of products than in the Soviet Union and rendering the system more open to negotiation.

Besides, unlike the Soviet model, there is in China a more substantial number of production enterprises subordinated to control and administration other than the centre. There is, even dated back to the FFYP, a division of labour in industrial administration between the centre and the locality (Zhou, 1984:217). The locality has since then raised its shares, inducing the formation of sub-systems, especially during the successive rounds of decentralisation in the GLF and the CR. As a result, the Chinese planning and administration system is much more decentralised than that of the Soviet Union. The centre can control fewer

products, many of which are allocated outside central plans and with multiple prices. Lyons (1987:240) echoes this finding:

> China is not unique among planned economies in having experimented with compartmentalization along regional lines but rather in having retained such a system for a period long enough to fundamentally alter patterns of development.

We shall elaborate on how these Chinese specific features interact with the huge population size, the low level of economic development and the military consideration to produce specific causal mechanisms in investment and labour allocation.

The Chinese investment system tends to induce more investment activities. This has something to do with the devolution of operational responsibility to the provincial governments, and sometimes to their subordinates too. Planners of these governments are given extensive authority in setting targets, provided that they fulfil certain obligations. That planners (except those at the lowest tier of the administrative system) primarily deal with a smaller groups of intermediate agents rather than with a large number of individual production enterprises, makes balancing the transfers among agents their major concern. Or, "total output is of less immediate concern because much of the total may never enter their inter-unit balances" (Lyons, 1987:218). Whenever imbalances exist, both planners and enterprises increasingly perceive the presence of supply uncertainty. This perception hastens investment hunger. This problem is aggravated by the notorious co-ordination problem between vertical (the centre) and horizontal (the locality) sub-systems. Neither can depend on the other to ameliorate the shortage problem and both try to be self-sufficient, thereby duplicating the other's investment. In other words, investment hunger is induced not so much by taut plan *per se* than by decentralisation.

A brief review of the history of the Chinese investment system informs us that it has been very much decentralised. In terms of the authority to approve investment projects, the provinces, together with the ministries, are responsible for small projects,

while the State Planning Commission is for large ones. The provinces are also given the authority to approve local small projects. There is also a division of labour in terms of planning authority. Although there is a devolution of responsibility, the Centre is basically responsible for all planning activities during the FFYP. Since 1958, there has been delegation of planning, investment quota approval, enterprise ownership, budget control and material allocation powers to the local. In 1965, the provinces are responsible for planning a lump sum of investment resources allocated by the Centre for 18 non-industrial branches. The number of branches increases to 19 in 1968, and the power is even extended in 1974. In 1975, the provinces are responsible for all projects proposed by their subordinate agents. These facts clearly demonstrate the high degree of decentralisation in the Chinese investment system (Peng, 1989b:471-3, 479).

We have hinted earlier that the Chinese material allocation system has been loose as well. During the FFYP, the State Planning Commission is responsible for balancing and allocating essential (*tongpei*) materials and other commissions and central ministries for important (*bupei*) materials, the provinces are for other (*sanlei*) materials. Since then, not only has the number of essential and important materials been reduced, but also is the centre responsible only for balancing the transfers of these materials among provinces (Zhou, 1984:502-13). In other words, the provinces have been given more authority in material allocation. This larger authority enhances investment hunger.

Given these pre-conditions, one expects more investment, and this is exactly the picture. Partly as a response to the shortage problem caused by the cutbacks in investment in 1955 and partly due to the inherent expansionary drive, the actual capital construction investment from the state budgetary source in 1956 exceeds the planned target by a wide margin of 31%, while the extra-budgetary one increases to such an extent that it becomes the largest yearly total for the preceding five years. When the GLF starts, investment increases by leaps and bounds. The new capital construction fixed assets accumulated during 1958-60 is 152.6% of

that of the whole FFYP. Two-thirds of all large- and medium-sized new projects till 1964 commence construction during the GLF. Finally, during the CR decade, paralleling the development of the "third front" (*sanxian*) is the encouragement of locally initiated and financed projects. The outcomes are equally obvious. There is not only an astronomical increase in investment, but also the delegation of planning and various administration powers to the locality. This delegation campaign goes so far that the locality becomes the major consideration in the centre-local co-ordination. For example, local projects make up 67.9% of all investments between 1971 and 1975 (Peng, 1989a:67-8, 79-84, 118 and 183; Zhou, 1984:134-47).

It is important to pause a little and discuss the significance of the "third front" campaign as a spatial boundary effect. No one will dare deny its significance for Chinese development, as Naughton (1988, 1991) has tried forcefully to persuade us to believe (see also Peng, 1989a:156-99). Zhou (1983:21) even argues — and is quoted approvingly by Kirkby (1985:138) — that it is the military tension between China and USA and the Soviet Union that accounts for the observed Chinese urbanisation pattern. But this is an assertion, since the mechanism at work has not been elaborated (see our earlier discussion). As should be clear by now, the significance of the "third front" policy must also be understood in terms of its effect on breeding shortages by loosening the controls of planning and administration. What is so specific about this policy, however, is that investment hunger has taken the form of spatial decantation. Investment projects are located away from existing large cities, and so are the workers and their families.

In addition to the fact the investment system tends to induce more serious investment hunger, the labour allocation system in China tends to encourage more labour hoarding and, in confronting the problem incurred, take more stringent measures to curb it than in the Soviet Union. Partly growing out of the necessity to console the huge number of urban unemployed in the 1950s (He Guang, 1990) and partly as a tactic to control urban residents, China is forced to employ workers as regular workers

(*gudinggong*). Undoubtedly, during the economic readjustment period in the early 1960s, she experiments with contract workers (*hetonggong*), but this is banned once the CR starts. In other words, their employment contract guarantees that workers will be employed for the rest of their life once they have been assigned a job. This is in big contrast to the system in the Soviet Union. Dismissal is possible (Granick, 1987:116), and contract work is widely practised, even in 1956, as is reported by the Chinese delegation to the Soviet Union (He Guang, 1990:13). As argued by many Chinese critics (e.g., Feng and Zhao, 1981), this policy of the "iron ricebowl" will demoralise workers and reduce labour productivity. But what concerns us most is that this policy means even more labour hoarding to make up the deficiency in productivity. This problem is aggravated by the other feature of the Chinese system that children are entitled to take up their parents' job once they retire. This practice starts in 1956 and becomes institutionalised in 1962 (He Guang, 1990:133-4). There is no guarantee that the children are competent to take up their parents' job. This again amounts to labour slacks in one part of the production process or enterprises while it amounts to labour shortage in other parts or enterprises.

It is necessary to situate these problems within the context of the unified labour allocation system (*tongbao tongpei*) practised in China. Any person once reaching his/her working age is assigned a job by the state, but neither the workers themselves nor the production enterprises have much say in job assignment. This is nothing new to students of socialist economies, but, as Byrd and Tidrick (1987:67) have noted, the "control is more far-reaching in China than in Eastern Europe and the USSR because it extends to the assignment of individual workers to particular jobs." This does not only reduce labour mobility but it also increases the tendency to hoard labour. This problem of hoarding may be less serious when labour allocation is administered by a co-ordinated system. But as noted earlier, the Chinese system is aggregated, ill-defined and decentralised. Not surprisingly, these characteristics apply to labour administration too. Even dated back to

the height of centralisation during the FFYP, administration is carried out by labour bureaux at various levels. Once decentralisation has started, labour control is even looser, with the power delegated to the provincial and other local levels, thereby laying the ground for "spontaneous" labour recruitment and then rural-urban migration. For example, the actual amount of labour recruited for the year of 1956 exceeds the planned quota by more than one times. This situation happens again in 1958, when the number of staff and workers recruited exceeds the sum for the previous eight years by a factor of 1.26. Besides, 53% of the newly added staff and workers are peasants. Finally, the number of new staff and workers exceeds the planned target by a ratio bigger than two for 1970 and 1971 (He Guang, 1990:51, 126, 130-1, 137). Xu's (1987) account of the evolution of the population control system in Wuhan is illustrative of the chaos found in labour administration. During the FFYP, population migration is approved by sub-city public security bureaux only. Since 1958, approval can be obtained from the public security, labour, personnel, education, army or other bureaux at the provincial, city and sub-city levels, depending on the type of population migration. What the above has shown is that during the series of decentralisations, the existence of multiple control organisations — something unknown to the Soviet Union — has the effect of increasing labour hoarding and rural-urban migration.

With the problem being more serious than that experienced in the Soviet Union, we expect China to periodically — with more periods of shorter durations — implement more stringent measures to cut labour recruitment and curb rural-urban migration. Immediately after the "spontaneous" growth in 1956, the State Council in 1957 bans any new in-take. At the end of that year, the State Council imposes a ban on recruiting peasants as regular workers. There are many restrictions on recruiting them even as temporary workers. During the aftermath of the GLF, the State re-centralises the power of labour allocation and tightens the wage funds and rationing and the household registration administration. The most shocking measure is to send cadres,

workers and, most importantly, peasants to the countryside. Similarly, in 1972, all extra-plan labour recruitment is cut, and even natural growth in the labour force is not catered for. Then come the massive campaigns of sending down unemployed youth in the late 1960s and, again, since 1974. These are partly caused by the baby boom of the early 1950s (He Guang, 1990:54-7, 127-8, 131-2, 137-8). Because of these stringent measures, China is able to restrict the growth of urban population, or maintain, in Murray and Szelenyi's (1984) term, "zero urban growth." In comparison, due a smaller scale of decentralisation, one experiences stronger central co-ordination in investment and less "spontaneous" labour allocation in the Soviet Union. Concomitantly, the problems of labour in-take and then of rural-urban migration are less serious. Besides, the Soviet State is weaker and/or less inclined to impose stringent administrative restraint measures. As a result, urban population grows at a faster rate than that in China, giving us, again in Murray and Szelenyi's terms, either the "under-urbanisation" or "socialist intensive urbanisation." What we have argued above is that due to the spatial boundary effects, socialism has developed differently in China and in the Soviet Union, resulting in different versions of socialist urbanisation.

Secondly, and at a lower level of abstraction, we can find processes specific to urban areas in China. Even by the mid-1950s, one finds in China the co-existence of two almost completely discrete regulation systems: one is industry, the other agriculture. Each of these systems has its own institutions, causal mechanisms and array of possible events.[18] In the case of the industry system, we are talking about the relations between central planners and industrial production enterprises, between state enterprises and wage workers and between the police state and socialist men/women. Types of action include the creation of state enterprise, industrial worker, socialist patriot and the built environment. Not only are these institutions not found in the agricultural system, but also are these actions taking place largely in settlements administratively designated as urban places. In contrast, the institutions at issue in the agricultural system are,

first, the agricultural co-operative and, then, the commune. Their main concern is to raise agricultural production. Accordingly, peasants are banned from migrating to cities and towns by restraint measures — Guo *et al.* (1990:31-78) have identified 14 of them — and from completely switching to non-agricultural activities in rural places. These help maintain the spatial boundary of cities and towns.

Within the spatial bounds of the industrial institutions is a quite clearcut urban way of life. As argued in Tang (1990a), these institutions cause expansionary drives, a dynamic rarely found in the agricultural system. Cities and towns are not only the subject of investment hunger induced by the expansionary drive but also the breeding ground reproducing the expansionary drive. Cities and towns are growth magnets due to their larger and denser spatial organisation and spatial fixes (Tang, 1990a:18-25) and land allocation and control mechanisms (Tang, 1990b). Besides, to facilitate control, the State has partitioned the country into urban and rural spaces and controls the movement between the two; and in so doing, the State has established the spatial pre-conditions of surveillance, thereby reproducing its power and domination. Furthermore, while it is imperative for the Chinese state to control all realms of urban life, there are many attempts by its constituents to counteract that control. This conflict results in the development of cellular communities, which *de facto* administer the reproduction of *étatised* peasants and labourers by providing the basic facilities and services. Although it is the intention of the state to inculcate all urban men and women with *the* socialist ideology (the genuine socialist person should be submissive and obedient; have tight discipline and great dedication; sacrifice oneself for others and the present for the future; etc.), the outcome is increasing "ideological stratification." Individuals usually feel loyal to particular cellular communities rather than to society at large. Sites of cities and towns are places where these means of reproduction are located. Once equipped with these means, the sites act as the spatial framework of socialisation, having the effect of perpetuating the

personalised mode of control and the cellular communities (Tang, 1990a:43-59).

This discussion clearly demonstrates that the city in China does possess distinct institutions which are not only absent in rural areas but also irreducible to the constituting objects of the industrial system. This finding represents a direct challenge to the prevailing claim in the geographic and urban studies literatures that the difference between urban and rural is so blurred that one cannot talk of something urban and of another rural. This may be true for advanced capitalist countries, as advocated by, for example, Duncan (1989a:135): "the emergence of capitalism removed these urban-rural spatial boundaries (to the extent that they existed, which is debatable), and there appear to be few, if any, significant differences at the level of social mechanisms between urban and rural areas in modern societies." This is, as shown above, certainly not the case of capitalist and socialist third-world countries. As noted earlier, this view tends to be upheld by the realist camp of Duncan, Sayer and others as well as some of the non-realist camp, including Saunders. On the realist view, the city constitutes not so much an object of abstract theory as of concrete research. The above discussion has demonstrated clearly that urban-rural spatial boundaries still persist in China. As a result, city should be subject to abstract analysis. This finding tends to support the criticism made of the Euro-American nature of the urban and regional studies literature (Sidaway, 1990; Slater, 1989, 1992). It is beyond the scope of this paper to suggest new pointers for this literature. Instead, we shall focus on the implication of the above discussion for research on Chinese urbanisation.

One is reminded by Chan (1989) of the fact that it is the invocation of the industry-specific mechanisms that causes a particular form of urbanisation. Major capital investment projects are restricted to urban places, and so is the growth of the industrial labour force. Conversely, the rural economies and places are caused by agriculture-specific mechanisms, which cannot guarantee minimum investment, needless to say induce investment hunger. Consequently, the countryside is impeded from urbanis-

ing. The growth of urban population is nevertheless kept at a slow rate so as to channel resources to heavy industries. This is again caused by the working of the industry-specific mechanisms.

What Chan has, however, failed to note is the implication of another systemic aspect of the industry-specific mechanisms: the industrial system is composed of many departments. Propelled by its own expansionary drive, every department has its own investment, usually un-coordinated with other investments within a city. Production and transport costs are higher, and construction investment and labour in-take are greatly increased, because there is a duplication of production facilities. All these raise, to borrow Chan's terminology, the costs of industrialisation. Therefore, the costs of urbanisation must be economised due to the very structure inherent in the spatially bounded industrial system.

Another point of negligence is that the industry-specific mechanisms have different spatial boundaries. As mentioned earlier, the paternalistic relationships between the central state and its subordinate administrative organs (see also Kornai, 1980b:561-71; Peter, 1987; Solinger, 1987) define that the latter are given the power to rule their immediately subordinate counterparts in exchange for their loyality and continuous support to implement the central plan. This arrangement applies to every organ of the administrative hierarchy from the central state down to the lowest level. Accordingly, there is a division of power with lower level organs controlling fewer aspects or items of investment, material and labour allocation than their immediate superiors.

In the investment sphere, as noted earlier, there has been a clear division of authority in project approval and planning responsibility. While the State Planning Commission is responsible for large and medium projects, the provincial governments are responsible for approving small ones and planning non-industrial investment. These provincial powers may, in the case of devolution of operational authority, be found in county and city governments and communes, but certainly not of the same magnitude and coverage.

One finds a similar division of authority in material allocation. The central state is responsible for allocating essential materials, in the case of the State Planning Commission, and important materials, in the case of central ministries, whereas the provincial governments are responsible for other materials. In this hierarchy, the provincial governments are clearly in total command at least for a set of materials. Besides, even for the former categories of materials, the provincial and other local governments can still exert some influence because enterprises are required to submit quotas to the relevant agencies according to the relations of subordination. This aspect of power has grown since the end of the FFYP.

The state wholesale network is also organised hierarchically. At the top, there are first-level purchasing and supply stations set up directly under the various specialised national corporations of the Ministry of Commerce. They are found in major cities where commodities originate. At the next level, there are second-level purchasing and supply stations under the commerce departments or bureaux of the provincial governments. Finally, at the county level, there are third-level wholesale outlets. The establishment and administration of the latter two types of stations are under the sole jurisdiction of respective local governments (Zhou, 1984:474-86).

In labour allocation, the provincial governments have possessed a quite substantial amount of power since 1956. They have the authority of approving extra-plan worker quotas in 1956. In 1957, they are granted the power of formulating the collective enterprise labour plans for prefectures and counties. The power is increased drastically in 1958, when they can decide their own labour plans. As noted earlier, this power is even devolved to other local governments. In 1963, the provincial governments are empowered to recruit the approved number of staff and workers. This list has shown the substantial amount of power granted to the provincial governments in labour allocation, with some even devolved to their subordinate administrative organs.

It is apparent from the above brief discussion that, due to paternalism, various levels of government possess different powers, with organs at each level having more power than their immediate subordinates. Put differently, provincial governments have more power in planning and allocating investment, material and labour than county and city governments, which in turn have more power than communes, etc. To couch this discussion in the terminology of realism, there is, obviously, an uneven development of the social mechanisms related to the industrial system to such an extent that some social mechanisms can be derived locally in either the provinces or some other lower spatial jurisdictions.

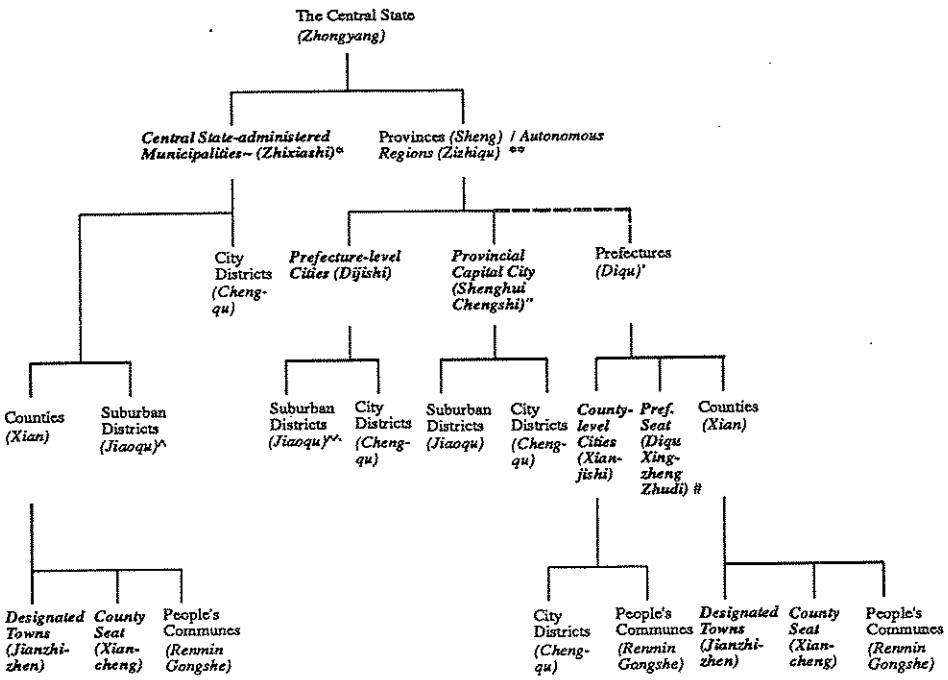
One can draw a spatial implication from these locally derived processes: at every administrative level, there is also a clear bias in favour of its political/administrative centre. One finds the prevalence of investment hunger at the level of local governments as well as in the enterprises subordinate to them. Given the importance of lobbying and bargaining in the Chinese system of decision-making (Oksenberg, 1982), and of *guanxi* ("relationships") in getting things done (Yang, 1989), proximity to the centre of decision-making is advantageous to acquiring investment, material and labour quotas. Being at the centre of a well established network of power, political/administrative centres at each administrative level usually receive higher priorities in quota and material allocations than their non-political/administrative counterparts.

The above discussion has rendered meaningful the differentiation of Chinese cities and towns by the administrative level at which they are situated and by the fact of being or not political/administrative centres. Figure 2 outlines the different categories of designated cities and towns in China, which are positioned on a simplified administrative hierarchy. At the top level, we have the central state-administered municipalities like Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai (at the end of 1978). Below there are the second level cities including prefecture-level cities such as Tangshan (in the province of Hebei) and provincial capital cities such as Shijiazhuang (in Hebei). County-level cities such as Baoding and prefecture seats such as Xingtai *shi* (for Xingtai *diqu*, Hebei) form the third level cities. Further down the urban system are designated towns, which include county seats (e.g., Zhangbei *zhen* for Zhangbei *xian*, Hebei) and other designated towns. In this figure, I have deliberately differentiated political/administrative centres of each administrative level from their counterparts to highlight the importance of being such centres in consolidating investment, material and labour quotas. For instance, although a provincial capital city and prefecture-level cities are both subordinated to the provincial government, the former will receive higher priorities due to its status as the political centre of the province.

There are evidences to confirm that political/administrative centres have been the ones with faster growth in urban population.[19] In his analysis of data between 1949 and 1985 — longer than our study period — Gu (1992:178-9) documents that provincial capital cities, prefecture seats and county seats have grown faster than their counterparts at respective administrative levels. They make up 70% of the continuously growing and steadily growing cities and towns. Yan *et al.* (1992:14) also remark on such a bias during the FFYP. First of all, more than 120 projects out of a total of 156 key-point projects are allocated to cities. Approximately three-fifths of these 120 and more projects are found in provincial capital cities. Another example presented by these authors is between Beijing and Shanghai, the two central state-administered municipalities. Being the capital of the nation, Beijing is able to advance ahead of its counterpart in that its total capital construction between 1953 and 1980 exceeds Shanghai's by a factor of 1.3.

We are now in the position to comprehend intelligently the uneven urban population growth among cities and towns. Beijing has grown faster than Shanghai, and Shijiazhuang faster than Tangshan not due to spatial contingency effect — where the urban-rural relations can support higher population growth — but due to spatial boundary effect — social relations specific to Beijing and Shijiazhuang. Some cities have grown faster than others due to the differences in the nature of the local govern-

Figure 2 Categories of Designated Cities and Towns, Superimposed on a Simplified Administrative Hierarchy, 1958-1978



Notes:

~	Those in bold-italics are designated cities and towns.
*	These include Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin (the last one was relegated to a prefecture-level city between 1958 and 1967).
**	The detailed hierarchy of autonomous regions, similar to the one presented here, has been excluded to simplify the presentation.
'	Legally not a level of government, a prefecture does not have its own people's congress and is only the representative agency *(paichu jigou)* of a provincial government overseeing the administration of a number of counties. Before 1967, *diqu* was called *zhuanqu* (special district).
"	Being a prefecture-level city according to the level of the urban hierarchy, a provincial capital city's sub-divisions resemble that of its counterpart.
^	There is no suburban districts for Shanghai.
^^	All prefecture-level cities in the province of Liaoning do include counties. The detailed sub-division of each of these counties will resemble other counties under, say, prefectures.
#	Either a prefecture-level city, county-level city, county seat or a designated town can be assigned as a prefecture seat.

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ments and in the political/administrative status. The former can grow faster because their governments can cause more investment and hoard more materials and workers. Some of these devolved authorities are simply not found in other, especially lower level, governments. These centres can grow faster also because they are in a position to capture the priorities of their governments.

That a considerable proportion of the urban population growth is concentrated in a few political/administrative centres, has rendered it easier to detect and dramatise the problems of rapid urbanisation. It also lays down the material conditions for the implementation of more stringent urbanisation policies. That helps to situate in context the policy of "control the size of large cities, rationally develop medium cities and vigorously develop small cities" advocated in the mid-1950s (He Yu, 1990:67-70; Shi, 1989; Zhao, 1984:44). Many of the big cities at that time are political/administrative centres that receive biased allocations in investment, material and labour. It is their political/administrative status that causes the growth and not merely being big cities *per se*. This cautious note also reveals the naivety of arguments that try to pin down the nature of Chinese urbanisation policy in the past as against metropolises and not against cities *per se* (e.g. Kwok, 1988).

To summarise, space makes a difference in the analysis of Chinese urbanisation via spatial boundary effect. The latter exists at two levels of abstraction. First, at the country level, socialism has developed unevenly over the globe, producing some peculiar causal mechanisms pertaining to the Chinese planned economy and socialist state. Specifically, the more aggregated, ill-defined and highly decentralised planning system and the stronger state have caused more investment, material and labour hoardings, on the one hand, and the implementation of more stringent population restraint measures, on the other. As a result, we have observed over time slower urban population growth. A closer examination of this slow growth shows that it is in more cycles of shorter duration. Secondly, at the level of China, Chinese socialism has developed unevenly over the country, resulting in

two almost discrete sets of social mechanisms: one, industry and the other, agriculture. They perpetuate the rural-urban divide, inhibiting the rapid urbanisation of the countryside while promoting a costly form of urban growth. The paternalistic relations between the State and its subordinate production enterprises and local governments are partly responsible for this costly form, as they tend to induce investment to concentrate in political/administrative centres rather than cities in general. This costly form of urbanisation has repeatedly in the past called for more stringent rural-urban migration restraint measures.

The Locality Effect

Finally, we can summarise the above discussion on spatial contingent and boundary effects and examine the role of the locality effect in understanding Chinese urbanisation. Insofar as there is minimal mobility of population and means of production and very few inter-enterprise linkages between urban and rural and within urban places, the spatial contingent effect of rural-urban differences and the spatial boundary effect of investment hunger would produce urban social systems irreducible to the industrial structure. We can then suggest the presence of *urban* culture and demands of *urban* residents and enterprises. The latter might be at odd with those of the nation as a whole. Also expansionary drive and state surveillance efforts interact in the setting defined by the existing spatial differentiation to produce, in Massey's (1984) terminology, layers of accumulation in particular spatial organisation (Tang, 1990a). The latter in turn call for actions in the succeeding period perpetuating the rural-urban divide. Due to their peculiar spatial organisation, the urban social systems so produced have their own causal mechanisms, causing more investment on urban physical infrastructures, more dependents of workers migrating from the rural areas and more land conversion from agricultural into non-agricultural uses than otherwise would be the case without these autonomous systems. This helps to explain the incessant calls for frugality campaigns to cut expenses on non-productive investment, rustication programmes to send

dependents of workers back to the countryside and policies to return unreasonably requisited agricultural land to the peasants (Fung, 1981; He Yu, 1990; Peng, 1989a; Zhao, 1984).

Summary

To summarise all the arguments in this section of the paper, we have found that the existing literature has dealt with the role of spatial relations inadequately. At most, models have made an implicit recognition of that role in their accounts of urbanisation. To make up this deficiency, we have shown how a realist informed account, first, sees spatial differentiation as contingent condition, activating the causal powers inherent in the Chinese planned economy and socialist state and effecting the observable "under-urbanisation." Secondly, we have found that as the city in China is irreducible to its constituents, it possesses causal power leading to the eventuation of urbanisation.

Conclusions

A few points can be summarised from the above brief review. We find the English literature on Chinese urbanisation wanting, for causal mechanisms have usually been chaotically conceptualised. The ideological analysis has failed to situate ideology in the context of the economy and the state. The class analysis has not realised that class is never as coherent as perceived. The economic analysis has forgotten that the Chinese economy is also ruled by a socialist state. In all these kinds of analysis, some of the necessary relations constituting the structure are missing. It is difficult for an abstract analysis to exclude the systemic features, institutional and non-institutional alike, of the Chinese planned economy and socialist state. We have also mentioned the possibility of applying the shortage economy of Kornai and the control model of Foucault to understand some of these subtleties. It has shown how the structure of socialism has produced causal mechanisms of investment hunger, causing capital, material and labour hoarding. The main body of the text has preliminarily applied the Foucauldian approach to shed some lights on a new interpretation of urbanisation. More work has to be done to improve this interpretation — particularly to integrate the political with the economic aspects of urbanisation.

An explanation of Chinese urbanisation will also remain inadequate if the role of spatial relations is ignored. Spatial differentiation, expressed in terms of the availability of linkages, flows and interactions of particular kinds, can serve as a spatial contingent condition activating the causal powers inherent in the Chinese planned economy and socialist state. The city as a spatial boundary effect is also found to be a theoretical object having its own causal power irreducible to its constituents. Furthermore, these two concepts combine to produce the locality effect, which helps make sense of some of the forces of urbanisation. All these are implications drawn after a review of the debate initiated by the realist concept of space/urban.

We can expect that the above findings will provide us pointers to understand urbanisation after the economic reforms initiated in 1978. While the extent to which the Chinese system has been transformed is still debatable, our finding that it is necessary to look into the systemic features for causal mechanisms will certainly still be valid. Unless we come up with a rational abstraction of the structure, it is difficult to come to terms with the new urbanisation policies and patterns, including the spatial annexation of county by city (*shidaixian*) and the flowing population (*liudong renkou*). We can equally expect that spatial relations will be even more significant in accounting for the diversity of urbanisation policies and patterns over the country. Unless we think in line with the spatial contingent effect, spatial boundary effect and locality effect of social processes in space, it is difficult to imagine the blossoming of regional models of urbanisation such as the Su'nan, Zhujiang Delta and Wenzhou.

On the philosophical and methodological fronts, the findings of our analysis of the role of spatial relations in Chinese urbanisa-

tion may make a small contribution to the mainstream geographic and urban studies literatures. It has been debated whether space constitutes an abstract or concrete research. Our findings show that it is not so simple to separate the two. First, we have discovered that the city can be an object of abstract theory. Secondly, space has been argued as being concrete research from the perspective of one level of abstraction and abstract research from that of another level. The former refers to the understanding of the role of space as spatial contingent effect. Here, we are trying to combine the causal mechanisms of the structure of socialism with spatial differentiation of the Chinese context to understand urbanisation, whereas the latter refers to the understanding of Chinese urbanisation with due respect to the independent operation of Chinese specific systemic features. The city as constituted by the industrial system is argued as possessing causal powers of its own. In other words, to understand Chinese urbanisation, we need to simultaneously theorise the city and concretise the intervening role of spatial differentiation. It is difficult to imagine doing one without the other. This finding has the effect of enriching the realist philosophy, which has insisted that the concrete and the abstract are absolutely separable.

Notes

1. For a summary of the growth restraint measure, see Kirkby (1985:21-35) and Guo *et al.* (1990:31-78).
2. This fact has been widely documented in the literature. What has been basically ignored is, however, the continual sucking of manual labour from the countryside during the CR decade. This latter fact represents a direct challenge to the "anti-urbanism" thesis.
3. For an insightful discussion of the problems related to the mainstream policy model, see Schaffer (1984).
4. It is obvious that Mao conceptualises classes in terms of neither straight Marxian economic logic nor its adaptation to the socialist mode of production (Blecher, 1986:142-4).

5. Undoubtedly, one can identify some traits in Szelenyi's earlier work (1981). See also Konrad and Szelenyi (1977).
6. There are many other problems with their model such as the arbitrary partition between urban and rural and the failure to consider legislative and administrative forces. For a more systematic critique, see Sjoberg (1992).
7. Since Chan (1992), a later version, has not made any major revision to his earlier argument, we shall concentrate on the arguments of his earlier version.
8. Analyses adopting a similar economic interpretation have grown by leaps and bounds in the Chinese literature. For a glimpse of these arguments, one may consult Gu (1991), Guo and Hu (1991:117-31) and Meng (1992).
9. An old, but basically still valid, critique of the economic-base model can be found in Sayer (1976:195-201).
10. Many people have even questioned whether there really is planning in socialist countries (e.g., Rutland, 1985; Wilhelm, 1979, 1985; Zaleski, 1980).
11. Kornai's (1980a, 1980b) is still by far one of the best analyses of the socialist economy in general. It has been applied to understand Chinese urban (Tang, 1990a, 1990b) and regional (Tang, 1991) questions.
12. For a fuller elaboration of the spatial aspects of the Foucauldian approach, see Philo (1992).
13. Gu (1992:166-84) has identified that there are 223 newly designated cities between 1949 and 1985. By taking away those cities which have gained their city designation status for the first time after 1977 — and there are 90 of them — we have arrived at the magic number of 133.
14. There is a hiccup during the aftermath of GLF when the number is a record high of 4,429 in 1961.
15. Contrarily to our common belief, but in line with the argument presented here, Shue (1988) claims that peasants have increasingly been subject to the control of the Chinese State with the implementation of reform measures in agriculture. See also Siu (1989).

16. Others such as Kirkby (1985:137-8) have mentioned another "contingent" condition: the tense military relations between China and US-supported Taiwan in the 1950s and between China and US and Soviet Union in the 1960s and early 1970s. This issue will be more fully discussed in the next few pages.
17. One may also draw an implication from this interpretation: had industrial investment been concentrated on the coast, China would not have implemented these urbanisation policies in the first place.
18. The differences between industry and agriculture are best highlighted in the recent literature comparing industrial and agricultural reforms (e.g., Shirk, 1989:331-50).
19. We have mentioned earlier that centres with significant economic contributions have also experienced faster growth in urban population.

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中國城鎮化英文文獻評覽

鄧永成著

（中文摘要）

本文回顧了影響1949年至1977年中國城鎮化的動力。文章前半部論述了城鎮化的因果機制（非空間的）。無論是意識形態論、階級論或經濟論，都無法提出由社會主義國家機器和短缺經濟滋生的較體制性機制。文章後半部借用了空間相連、空間邊界及地點效應等概念，證明空間關係在展現城鎮化政策和模型上扮演著意義深長的角色。